

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

THE PEAL OF BELLS  
THE BLUE LION  
THE MONEY-BOX  
THE ORANGE TREE  
THE LITTLE ANGEL  
THE PLEASURES OF IGNORANCE  
THE GOLDFISH  
THE GREEN MAN  
IT'S A FINE WORLD  
RAIN, RAIN, GO TO SPAIN  
THE COCKLESHELL

---

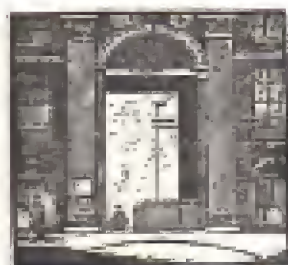
"Y.Y." An Anthology of  
Essays by Robert Lynd.  
Edited by Eileen Squire.

# BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

*by*

ROBERT LYND

(Y.Y.)



METHUEN & CO. LTD.

*36 Essex Street Strand London*

*First published in 1934*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

*TO*  
*MARY AND J. B. MORTON*





# Contents

	PAGE
I. THE LION AND THE SHEEP . . . . .	1
II. THE RING . . . . .	8
III. ON HOLDING THE TONGUE . . . . .	14
IV. CRUELTY TO CLERGYMEN . . . . .	22
V. TOP HATS . . . . .	28
VI. STREET CORNER . . . . .	34
VII. STORM TROOPS AT TWICKENHAM . . . . .	41
VIII. QUESTIONS ABOUT HAPPINESS . . . . .	48
IX. REASONS FOR AND AGAINST SMOK- ING . . . . .	55
X. FACTS ARE DECEPTIVE . . . . .	61
XI. SURPRISE IN SPAIN . . . . .	68
XII. GETTING THINGS DONE . . . . .	74
XIII. PRONUNCIATION . . . . .	80
XIV. THE OLD PRISON . . . . .	87
XV. DINNER . . . . .	94
XVI. THE SIN OF IMPATIENCE . . . . .	100
XVII. THE PATRIOT . . . . .	107
XVIII. THE RECORD . . . . .	113
XIX. MARRIAGE . . . . .	119
XX. VERITY'S TEST MATCH . . . . .	124
XXI. THE MOST POPULAR OF THE VICES . . . . .	131
XXII. THE CASE FOR NOISE . . . . .	138

# BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

	PAGE
XXIII. THE GUIDE . . . . .	144
XXIV. PINCHING . . . . .	150
XXV. THE DRAW . . . . .	157
XXVI. BATH-WATER . . . . .	164
XXVII. OUR ANCESTORS . . . . .	171
XXVIII. THE MAGNETIC EYE . . . . .	178

## I. The Lion and the Sheep

‘IT is better,’ Mussolini has been assuring his followers, ‘to live as a lion for a day, than as a sheep for a hundred years.’ This seems to me to be highly improbable. I have never heard anything about the lion that has made it seem worth while being a lion even for a single day. It is a beast that cannot compromise with civilization. Certain scholars believe that it survived in Greece till fairly civilized times, but the Greeks apparently thought poorly of it, since they got rid of it before the great days of Pericles. Europe, indeed, scarcely began to be civilized till the last lion had been killed or captured. It is only as a slave beast that it has been allowed to exist in Europe for the last two thousand years and more. The Romans found lions entertaining animals to throw Christians to, but they did not let lions loose in their fields. To-day the best use to which Europeans can put lions is to imprison them in a cage in a zoo. There is a lion in the Roman Zoo with an inscription on the cage announcing that it is the gift of Mussolini. Is it worth while being a lion in order to be presented to a zoo even by a statesman of genius? Does Mussolini really regard it as the lordliest life to prowl and growl in a cage and to be stared at by trippers? Better than that, surely, even to be a clergyman



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

exhibiting himself in a barrel at Blackpool for gain. The clergyman at least is free outside his working hours, and does not live under the domination of a keeper. On the whole, the caged lion's life seems little superior to that of a convict, except for the fact that it is pampered at meal-times.

As for the lion in its native haunts, what qualities has it that should make human beings envy it? According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 'the accounts of early writers as to courage, nobility, and magnanimity have led to a reaction, causing some modern writers to accuse it of cowardice and meanness'. Livingstone denied that it was either as ferocious or as noble as its reputation. At best it is a sneaking sort of animal. It is a beast of prey that does not like to be seen about in daylight, an assassin that strikes in the dark. It has no sense of honour and seldom attacks its victim openly. 'For the most part he steals upon it in the manner of a cat, or ambushes himself near to the water of a pathway frequented by game.' We need not be over-censorious of him, for he is no more than a beast; but he is no model for young men in the twentieth century.

True, he is strong and good-looking, and he can gallop for short distances almost as fast as a horse. Also he has a most impressive roar. The *Encyclopaedia* quotes an admirable description by Gordon-Cumming of the roaring of lions at its best. 'On no occasion,' he declares, 'are their roars to be heard in such perfection, and so



## THE LION AND THE SHEEP

intensely powerful, as when two or three troops of strange lions approach a fountain to drink at the same time. When this occurs, every member of each troop sounds a bold roar of defiance at the opposite parties, and, when one roars, all roar together, and each seems to vie with his comrades in the intensity and power of his voice. The power and grandeur of these nocturnal concerts is inconceivably striking and pleasing to the hunter's ear.'

That, I think, is the secret of the lion's charm for human beings. He is no use except for killing Christians, but he can roar magnificently. Every normal human being longs to be able to roar, to 'sound a bold roar of defiance at the opposite parties'. There are few greater luxuries known to men than that. We like even to hear other people roaring: it convinces us of their sincerity. We are spellbound if the roar is loud enough.

I remember how a clergyman, returning from a holiday too late to have time to prepare his Sunday sermon, once borrowed a manuscript sermon of my father's and took it into the pulpit with him on the following morning. To his consternation he found that there were words and phrases in the manuscript which, when he came on them, he could not make head or tail of, owing to the difficulty of the handwriting. He afterwards described how he triumphed over circumstances. 'When I came to a sentence that I could not read,' he said, 'I simply beat the cushion and roared as loud as I could.' After the service people came round



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

and congratulated him with shining eyes on having performed the greatest feat of oratory of his life. There is music in a roar, as the greatest street-corner orators know. Anybody can talk sense, but hardly anybody will listen to it; roar the greatest nonsense at the top of your voice, however, and a crowd will be listening open-mouthed before the end of two minutes.

Hence it is not surprising that the art of roaring is being more and more widely practised in Europe every day. Reason is for the moment dethroned, not being sensational enough for the age of the film; instinct has taken its place; and instinct bids men roar. The politics of roaring have captured some of the leading countries of Europe, and roaring has even spread to literature. I have read several works by young writers lately which were little more than roaring at the opposite parties. Let the roarers not deceive themselves, however, into imagining that one has only to roar like a lion in order to be a lion. According to Livingstone, the roar of a lion is indistinguishable from that of an ostrich. Possibly, a good deal of roaring that is going on in Europe to-day is the roaring not of lions but of ostriches.

Even so, the roar of a lion is terrifying to most human beings, and it is natural to wish to strike terror into one's fellow-men. That, no doubt, is why the British adopted the lion as their patron animal. All these national animals imply challenge and hostility. The Scots even chose the most minatory of plants as a patriotic



## THE LION AND THE SHEEP

emblem. The Americans and Germans symbolized their nationality with that not very useful bird of prey, the eagle. The French made a more civilized choice in the farmyard cock, but it must be remembered that the cock is the most pugnacious of domestic birds. It seems to me that we shall never have peace in the world till we have got rid of all these fighting beasts and birds as emblems of patriotism. Can the League of Nations not appoint a committee to investigate the matter? It would need only a few sittings to abolish the whole menagerie of pugnacity, and to assign to each nation a symbolic animal denoting peace and goodwill. Germany might become dove-like if only she got accustomed to thinking of herself as a dove. America might forget her debt if she saw herself admiringly as the milch-cow of Europe. Italy might become even more lovable than she remains under all her rulers if she adopted as her patron animal the harmless ortolan. Russia might become the pet of Europe if everybody got to associate her with some household pet—say, a kitten. England, I am sure, would be glad to get rid of her leonine reputation. It is obviously already her intention, if she remains a lion at all, to become more and more like the lion who refused to eat Androcles. That is what makes Lord Rothermere so impatient. If he had seen the lion making friends with Androcles in the arena, he would have cried out angrily to it: 'What do you think lions are for? Get on with your job, and none of this white-flaggery.'



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

Yet Androcles's lion is the only lion I ever heard of that everybody loves. That, it may be retorted, is because we are getting soft. The truth is, we were always soft. Nobody ever liked the idea of being eaten by a wild beast.

The theory, then, that it would be a fine thing to live like a lion for a day does not seem to hold water. If the life of a lion were so deserving of praise men would not for centuries have been doing their best to exterminate him. The sheep, on the other hand—*there* is an animal that all human beings, except vegetarians, admire and do their utmost to keep alive. We rent fields and mountain-sides for the sheep's exclusive use. We pay shepherds to look after him as we pay nursemaids to look after our children. We buy sheep-dip to keep him clean, and feed him in winter, and cut his hair, and, in fact, treat him more or less as one of ourselves. It is true that in the end we kill him, but we kill him, not as we kill a lion, because we dislike him, but because we like him. Meanwhile, he can live with a good conscience. He is no nocturnal skulker preying on his fellow-creatures. He is not the terror of the community, but its generous servant. Why should he not be happy, even if he lived for a hundred years? I should have thought that in almost every respect the sheep was the pattern of the good citizen. He helps to clothe and feed us as no lion ever did; and scarcely ever does a sheep die without leaving the world a better place than he found it. And what a life he has while it lasts—those skipplings

## THE LION AND THE SHEEP

of infancy, that endless sociability, that perpetual holiday among some of the finest scenery on the planet! The lion in his cage has no life comparable to this. Even the poor hunted lion in the jungle, roar as he will, can never enjoy the free life of the sheep. Mussolini should think again. I cannot see a single ground, apart from the roar, on which it is not infinitely better to be a sheep than a lion.



## II. The Ring      ♪      ♪      ♪      ♪

THERE is something peculiarly attractive in the setting of a boxing contest in the Albert Hall. The little square ring in the midst of the vast circle of the hall has the remoteness from reality of a scene in the theatre, as two strong men in bathing-drawers pursue one another with intent to hurt under the glare of the top-lights. The audience that crowds floor and box and balcony is seen through a mist of tobacco-smoke, a company of shadows. It is an immensely critical audience, easily moved to laughter or applause or protest. It shouts remarks. It does not mind booing the decision of the referee. It is, I suppose, fighting in its own imagination as each blow is struck, and it is with a leap of the fighter's heart that it sees a glove well and powerfully planted between the eyes, or ribs pounded till you would think they would break. I have none of these emotions myself. I feel half-sorry as well as half-pleased when I see a man receiving a stinging blow on the nose. Yet the true lover of boxing—whom I greatly envy—is aware of nothing but delight. He loves what he calls a 'vicious punch' as the true Rugby enthusiast loves what he calls 'remorseless tackling'. It is a strange fact that things that are regarded as evils in ordinary life—'viciousness' and 'remorselessness', for



## THE RING

example—should be lauded as virtues in sport. The explanation may be, that the words do not mean the same thing in ordinary life as in sport. What a boxing enthusiast means by a 'vicious punch' is really a 'virtuous punch', and all hearts, save half of mine, go out to it.

When I arrived in the top balcony of the Albert Hall, two large and perspiring men were feeling about hopefully for each other's eyes, jaws, and bodies far down below me. The taller of the two, Ben Foord of South Africa, was feeling about the more energetically of the two. He danced up and down and round and round his German opponent, Hans Schonrath, who moved deliberately as a bear, defending himself from the shower of blows that were aimed at him. Then, as if without an effort, Hans would walk slowly forward into the shower and, heedless of the blows that struck him, force Foord back against the ropes, flashing a blow on the face that seemed to be as damaging as three of Foord's blows. Cook has said of Schonrath: 'Hitting this guy is like punching a brick wall,' and the folds of muscle that covered his body made one feel that it was a hopeless task for a man of slighter build to keep on pounding at him. Foord, however, refused to believe this. Again and again, as he swayed for an instant against the ropes under the impact of a blow, one would have thought that he could have no heart to return to the attack. The more exhausted he looked at one instant, however, the more fiery was the determination with which



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

he roused himself and advanced into the centre of the ring the next. He would get through Schonrath's defence with a blow that made even that strong man breathe a 'Whoof!' Then they would become entangled in each other's arms, aiming sleepy blows at each other's bodies, like two weary Titans all but overcome with slumber, till the referee slapped them on the arms and cried 'Break!' And so the fight continued, the aggressive war-dance of Foord and the bear-like advances of Schonrath to encounter it, while, at every blow struck, the spectators shouted enthusiastically. At length, the last bell brought the last round to a close, and Foord's arm was raised in the air as a signal that he had won on points. Part of the audience booed loudly, for, among the spectators at a boxing match, there is no nonsense about its being unsportsmanlike to question the decision of the referee. I thought myself the German had won, but then I happened to know nothing about it and to know that I knew nothing.

The next bout was between two small boys, and a considerable part of the audience treated it as an interval and went off to the bars for a drink. A quarter of an hour later they were all in their seats again, chattering excitedly about the fight that was to follow between two flyweight world-champions, Jackie Brown of Manchester, and Midget Wolgast of America. It is a little difficult to understand how the world can possess two flyweight world-champions at the same time. The explanation is that Midget Wolgast is



## THE RING

recognized as world-champion in the four States of New York, Pennsylvania, California, and Massachusetts, while Jackie Brown has been crowned world-champion by thirty-six American States, the International Boxing Union, and the British Boxing Board of Control. As the boys made their way with their seconds to the ring the organ played to an accompaniment of hoarse and rapturous shouting. A scarcely audible M.C. stood in the ring and did his best without the aid of a megaphone to introduce the fighters to us. Jackie Brown, being from Manchester, received the fiercer uproar of welcome, but a dark youth beside me stood up and made almost as much noise as the rest of the audience on behalf of Wolgast. 'Why do you want him to win?' somebody asked him. 'He's an Italian,' said the young man; and, putting his hands round his mouth, he yelled: 'Go on the Wop! Up the Wops!' Dressing-gowns were removed, gloves fixed, and everybody except the boys and the referee tumbled out of the ring. The boys shook hands and began to dance up and down on the floor as though it were charged with electricity. Jackie became the dancing centre of a circle round the circumference of which Midget danced, dodging every attempt to advance upon him till he saw an opportunity to get in a crashing blow. He danced in a crouching attitude, his head seeming to be no higher at times than Jackie's waist, and, as he raised his head, Jackie would shoot out an arm like lightning, and strike a perfect blow on a space of



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

air where Midget's head had been an instant before. Midget's elusiveness, however, did not mean that he was unwilling to fight. He was obviously waiting for Jackie to tire himself out with hitting the air, and no sooner did he see an opening than he ceased to crouch, and with an arm even swifter than Jackie's struck with all his might between Jackie's nose and eyes. It was an even battle in which Jackie worked the harder with his fists and Midget with his legs, while, at every blow that Midget got in, the Italian beside me yelled: 'Go it, Midget, knock his block off!' And the man next him yelled in support: 'So as his mother wouldn't know him.'

It was not so easy, however, to knock Jackie's block off. He, too, has a fine head for dodging, and some of Midget's best blows that were meant for the block reached only empty air, at which Jackie's supporters roared with joy. Both boys fought with the eagerness of bantam-cocks, and, when they stood body to body, pounding each other's ribs, like drummers playing a tattoo, their arms worked so fast that if they had worked much faster they would have been invisible. For the most part, however, Jackie's courage was wasted. Midget has been called the will-o'-the-wisp of the ring, and to fight him must be like trying to catch a swallow's shadow. There was one round in which scarcely an effective blow was struck. Even so, there were enough blows struck in the course of the evening to draw from strong, silent men cries of

## THE RING

joy such as 'Good shot!' 'That was a beauty!' 'Let him have it, Jackie!' and even from one barbarous spectator 'Kick him, Midget!' But the great pleasure of the evening was to watch heroic skill being baffled by skill even greater and equally heroic. The Midget, combining the tactics of Fabius and Proteus, must be one of the world's wonders.

When he was awarded the victory there was an uproar of protest and booing, and, to quell it, Jackie went up to the Midget and put his arm round him. Then he held up his arm to the spectators and laughed at them. It was a good and high-spirited fight, by the end of which Midget had certainly proved the truth of his noble saying to one who had spoken of the necessity of his becoming acclimatized to England: 'You can take it from me that acclimatizing squawks are just bolony.'



### III. On Holding the Tongue      ~      ~

AT the top of a column of 'Personal' advertisements in the *Daily Telegraph* there recently appeared a paragraph:

'REMEMBER WHAT SIMONIDES SAID—that he never repented that he had held his tongue, but often that he had spoken.—PLUTARCH.'

It is difficult to see anything bearing the signature of Plutarch without a readiness to assume its wisdom in advance; and many people regard almost any saying in praise of silence as wise. The makers of the proverbs seem to agree with the majority that the invention of articulate speech was a doubtful blessing. They admit that speech is silver, but insist that by comparison silence is golden. They believe so little in the healing power of speech that they tell us that 'least said is soonest mended' and that 'soft words butter no parsnips'. Even in everyday conversation most of us are confirmed despisers of talk. To call a man a talker is to stamp him as a humbug. The bitterest enemies of Parliamentary Government feel they have proved their case when they have described Westminster as a 'talking-shop'. To such lengths did the dispraise of speech grow in England in recent centuries, indeed, that the popular imagination invented a 'strong silent Englishman' as the national



## ON HOLDING THE TONGUE

hero. Emerson said that the English preferred a man who spoke badly in public to a real orator. They thought there must be something in a man who was a fool with words.

I am rather sceptical in regard to all eloquent attacks on speech. One may admit that the tongue is an unruly member, given to bitterness and lying as well as to truth and gentleness, but on the whole silence can claim no superiority over speech such as the proverbs suggest. We do not choose our friends from among the silent. On meeting a singularly silent man, we do not say to ourselves: 'So-and-so never says a word: we must invite him to dinner.' Most of the people we like best are people who talk far too much. Listen to a group of friends, and you will notice how most of them are constantly scrambling for a place in the conversation. Sentences break into sentences like waves at a river-mouth, and, before one sentence is finished, another sentence is begun from another corner of the room. Some conversations are like a mad game of tennis, in which several balls are kept flying over the net simultaneously. So eager for speech are most of those present that the weaker-throated members of the company seldom get further than a half-sentence such as 'What I always say is——' (I think Mr. Logan Pearsall-Smith has, in *Trivia*, a thumb-nail sketch of a man who has never been allowed to say more than 'What I always say is——' at the dinner-table.) And the dinner-parties that we remember most kindly are those at which there has



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

been an excess of conversation, not those at which there have been numerous lapses into silence.

What worse purgatory can a silent man endure than to be placed at a dinner-party between two perfectly silent women? This matters little enough where the conversation is general, but at those tables at which the guest is expected to talk to each of his neighbours in turn, how torturing is the situation! How mellifluous would sound even a remark from the lady on his right upon the wetness of the day! I have known men, however, so unskilled in the art of conversation that, on hearing such a remark, they could only smile and answer, 'Yes.' I knew one poet who on such occasions could only smile without saying anything, and wait for his nerve-stricken neighbour to proceed with her meteorology. It is one of the worst faults of silence that it gets on the nerves. I knew a charming hostess who confessed that she always looked forward with apprehension to having as her chief guest an eminent statesman to whom she did not know how to talk. She was a lady who greatly and modestly underestimated her own intelligence, and imagined that she was a dunce because she could not talk about Hegel. And, as she could not talk to the statesman about Hegel—which was his pet subject—she said nothing and was in a flutter of nerves till the meal was over. Having watched the statesman at her table, I came to the conclusion that she was mistaken.



## ON HOLDING THE TONGUE

I do not think that he wanted to talk about Hegel or anything else. He was a man, it seemed to me, who enjoyed good food and good wine and who was perfectly content to sit eating and drinking without the interruption of words. Little do these elderly gourmets realize the consternation their silent absorption in baby turkey, which so closely resembles absorption in Hegel, causes in the hearts of their hostesses.

Not being an eloquent conversationalist myself, I am under no illusions as to the virtues of silence. When I hold my tongue, it is not through strength of character; it is because I cannot do anything else. Some of my earliest memories are of those hideous moments at parties when I was introduced to a little tongue-tied girl to whom I did not know what to say. At such moments everything would be all right if one could keep one's head. If one could keep one's head one would realize that, rather than stand stupidly silent, it was better to ask even some abruptly fatuous question like: 'Do you like apples?' Food is always a bond, even among the ordinarily silent. I have overheard lovers on Hampstead Heath carrying on quite a good conversation on the subject of cold ham. The silent child, however, is particularly fastidious about the things he says, and discards nearly everything that comes into his head as too silly to be worth saying. As he gets older he learns that there is nothing too silly to be worth saying. Hence the comparative success



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

of most parties. Everybody acts on the principle, 'Anything to avoid that dreadful hull.' Simonides might have gone home from a party boasting that he had not said a single word during the evening and had helped by his conspicuous silence and refusal to speak to anybody to reduce the party on several occasions to a condition of anguish. If he had been an Englishman, however, he would afterwards have found fewer and fewer invitations on his mantelpiece. Possibly, he would not have minded that.

I am sure, however, few people would agree with Simonides in regretting what they have said oftener than what they have left unsaid. Take letter-writing, for example. I feel regretful about scarcely three letters that I have written in the course of my life; but I feel deeply regretful about three thousand that I ought to have written and did not write. To communicate is not only one of the great pleasures of life: it is one of the great duties of life; and Simonides will never persuade me that the non-letter-writer has or ought to have as clear a conscience as the letter-writer. The worst of not writing letters is that one writes them hundreds of times in one's head, and wastes hours during sleepless nights repenting of not having written them on paper.

And is it not the same in regard to many of the things one might have said and did not? The semi-dumb man finds himself in a difficulty in the utterance both of compliments and of witticisms. His friends do not know, except by



## ON HOLDING THE TONGUE

a process of inference, how much he likes them. Some reluctance of the tongue prevents him from praising them—their looks, their clothes, their noble conduct, their work—as he longs to do. I know a man who has never paid a higher compliment to the most beautiful of his wife's beautiful frocks than a kind of grunt. I often think he must have proposed to her in dumb show. This inarticulateness in the expression of admiration and affection might have appealed to Simonides, but then Simonides was a master of language and knew nothing of the agonies of inarticulateness and the aftermath of repentance it brings.

The only good thing I know about inarticulateness is that, while it hinders a man from telling the people he likes how much he likes them, it also prevents him from telling the people he dislikes how much he dislikes them. It is almost impossible for him to say to a woman, 'What a beautiful frock you are wearing!' but it is still more impossible for him to say to a woman, 'What a fright you look in that frock!' He is unable to say to a friend, after listening to an after-dinner speech, 'By George, you were in great form to-night!' but he is also unable to say to another friend, 'By George, old man, that forty-minutes' speech of yours ought to be patented by a chemist and sold as a soporific!' Thus, there are some compensations for those who are cursed with a talent for silence. On the other hand, even the most loquacious people seem able to suppress their feelings about those whom



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

they would like to insult, while giving free expression to their feelings about those whom they wish to praise or flatter. Anybody except a Diogenes can hold his tongue about unpleasant truths. The silent man's trouble is that he feels compelled to hold his tongue even about pleasant truths.

As for witticisms, everybody knows that the man who failed to make the brilliant retort that he thought of too late repents far more bitterly than the man who had the presence of mind to make the brilliant retort at the right moment. Who can doubt which of the two feels happier in his soul on returning home after a party?

For these reasons, I believe that loquacity is more of a virtue than a vice. The wisest men, from Solomon and Socrates down, have been mainly loquacious—as soon, at least, as they got out of earshot of their still more loquacious wives. Literature is merely a form of loquacity: statesmanship is another. England has never chosen a dumb Prime Minister, though America is said once to have chosen an almost dumb President. As regards other walks of life, what chance would a silent clergyman have of becoming Archbishop of Canterbury, and what business concern would advertise for a strong, silent advertising manager? Most of the ablest men I know are talkative. They persuade themselves that they admire the strong, silent man, but that is only because he listens to them. When the strong, silent man and the strong, talkative man meet, the strong, silent man

## ON HOLDING THE TONGUE

is as putty in the strong, talkative man's hands.

Hence, I conclude, both on moral and practical grounds, that speech is golden and silence silver—and, as a rule, merely silver-plating at that.



#### IV. Cruelty to Clergymen



AS one who wishes well to the Church of England, I note with apprehension that a Sussex squire has left an instruction in his will that, when a new incumbent is being chosen for a living on his family estate, preference shall be given to 'a man who is a sportsman and not a total abstainer from alcohol or tobacco'. Tests of some kind, I suppose, are necessary in the selection of a clergyman. It is desirable, most of us would agree, that a clergyman should not be an atheist. Even the most broadminded would agree that he should not be a fanatical and militant atheist. Again, he should not have committed any recent crimes, or at least not crimes of the major sort, such as murder, burglary with firearms, forgery, or arson. It is preferable, on the whole, that he should not be married to more than one woman at a time. He should be able to read and write and to perform the ceremonies of baptism and marriage in a becoming manner. I should not protest even against his being subjected to a clothes test, for why should a clergyman not be compelled to dress like a clergyman? I have no desire to see shirts open at the neck and hikers' shorts in the pulpit. All these seem to me proper tests of a man's fitness to be a curate. Here there are no unwarrantable interferences with human freedom.



## CRUELTY TO CLERGYMEN

On the other hand, I should object vehemently to tests such as would restrict or warp a good man's personality. Thus I hold that an incumbent should be chosen on religious rather than political grounds. His politics should be left to himself like his diet at the table. It will be a bad day for the Church of England when it is announced that no one except Bolshevists and vegetarians need apply for ordination. One might as well limit the Church to Baconians or Stratfordians, to motorists or pedestrians. The fewer compulsions we have in the Church or elsewhere the better. A Church that excludes half the best citizens from its service will be deprived of half its vigour. That, I am afraid, is what will happen if the Church of England officially adopts the policy of the Sussex squire and puts a ban on all who are not sportsmen and are total abstainers and non-smokers.

If it does, I foresee that one of its first difficulties, in laying down rules for the acceptance of candidates for ordination, will be to define the word 'sportsman'. I myself have been called a sportsman only once. It was by a racing tipster who waylaid me in the street and urged me to allow him to send me secret information about horses from Newmarket. In order to get rid of him I told him that I betted very little and then in such very small sums that I did not much care whether I won or lost. He wrung me warmly by the hand, while his eyes lit up with enthusiasm. 'You're the kind of man I like,' he declared, '——a real sportsman. And just



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

because I can see you're a real sportsman, I'm going to tell you one thing: don't miss Golden Bracelet in the three-thirty to-morrow. I go down on my bended knees and beseech you not to miss Golden Bracelet. It's a cert. Here's my address.' And he thrust a dirty piece of paper bearing his address into my hand so that, if Golden Bracelet won, I should be able to communicate with him and get more like it. Of course, when I told him that I did not care whether I won or lost, I lied. I should care even if the bet were only a shilling. And here I think I resemble the real sportsman. King Edward was, as everybody knows, a real sportsman, and Mr. E. F. Benson has recently told us how angry King Edward got with his partner when he lost at cards. I have known a good many sportsmen, and some of them have scarcely been able to back a loser without being convinced that the jockey had lost the race on purpose. How often have I heard men speak bitterly of some poor horse that had never asked them to back him and that never won when they did? I heard a man in a Donegal hotel one night, at mention of a horse called Minnehaha (which he pronounced with the accent on the last syllable, like a harsh laugh), exclaim, with concentrated venom: 'Minnehaha! I have bought that horse all but the tail!' Is it into this world of jangling suspicion and irresponsible hatred that the clergy of the future are to be precipitated? Must, too, the Newmans and the Puseys of the next generation be compelled to provide the right



## CRUELTY TO CLERGYMEN

answers to an examination-paper which asks them: 'What is the meaning of (a) "backing a horse each way", (b) "ten to one the field", (c) "eight to one bar one", (d) "the distance"' ? There is many an honest rector in England to-day who, if he went to a race-course, would not even know how to place a bet with a book-maker, and to whom the book of form would convey as little as a page of Hebrew conveys to a layman. Are his successors to be compelled to spend laborious nights and days mugging up such things, which, after all, bear very little relation to the question of our immortality? I myself am convinced that it is possible for a man, whether lay or cleric, to live the good life without knowing the difference between a classic race and a handicap; and, this being so, I am utterly opposed to any attempt to exclude from the service of the Church of England men of lofty character against whom no charge can be laid except that they are imperfectly acquainted with the pages of *Ruff's Guide to the Turf*.

Nor, if a sportsman is to be defined as a man who gallops after foxes on horseback, do I think that a clergyman should be compelled to be a sportsman in this sense. I believe that it is possible for a man to save his soul and the souls of other people without ever jumping over a five-barred gate. I am all for the rights of fox-hunters, but still more—if that were possible—for the rights of rectors. A fox's brush is good, but it is not the chief end of man. I doubt even whether knowledge of the other great sport



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

called cricket can rightly be made a matter of salvation. I have known fairly upright men who detested cricket. And the same is true of football. Does anybody sincerely believe that St. Peter inquires of petitioners at the gate what teams got relegated from the first division of the League in 1934? If ignorance of such things does not exclude a man from Heaven, neither should it exclude him from a Sussex pulpit.

As for tobacco and alcohol (as everybody except those who drink it calls it), why should we torture initiate parsons by forcing such unnatural drugs into their unwilling mouths? I speak as one who is neither a non-smoker nor a total abstainer, but who realizes that there are many of the weaker brethren who have never been able to overcome their innate distaste for tobacco and alcohol. After all, it is no fun learning to smoke and drink. Certainly no tyrant ever subjected his victims to deadlier miseries than I endured at the age of five after smoking my first pipe. I would not willingly force such tortures on any fellow-mortal as the price even of an archbishopric. It may be replied that what a man—especially a clergyman—needs in this life is a resolute and disciplined character, and that there is no finer moral discipline than the persistent effort to love what one naturally loathes. The child is compelled to swallow his medicine, however distasteful; and it may be argued that on the same principle the dean should be compelled to go on smoking pipeful after pipeful of brown cavendish, even



## CRUELTY TO CLERGYMEN

though the chill sweat on his brow warns him that something worse than death is approaching. I doubt, however, whether we are all called upon to be heroes. It is in the little things of life, not in mighty exploits, that virtue is most surely tested. A man may be a good husband and father and yet go green before he has finished half a cigar.

Similarly, I have known almost saintly men who could not swallow a glass of whisky, even as medicine, without making wry faces. Nature has implanted in all of us a deep dislike of tobacco and alcohol; and thousands of people, do what they will, can never overcome this distaste. One man finds that he gets drunk if he swallows a glass of champagne. Another feels rheumatism shooting through his bones if he sips a little white wine. Guinness, no doubt, is good for you and me, but may it not upset the suffragan bishop? To me it seems that any man who would force a fellow-human-being to drink either wine or water against his will is a persecutor; and I do not wish to see the spirit of persecution reviving in the Church of England. Hence, though I commend the good intentions of the Sussex squire, I do not approve of his policy or wish to see it extended. I earnestly hope that the Church of England will always remember that it is no sin—or, at worst, a venial sin—to be either a non-smoker or a teetotaller.

## V. Top Hats      ∩      ∩      ∩      ∩

THE civilized world has always taken clothes pretty seriously. This is only natural as we have to spend a great part of our lives putting clothes on and taking them off again. If one could get back all the quarter-hours and half-hours one has spent in dressing and undressing, and join them together, one would find oneself with enough time on one's hands to write an eight-and-sixpenny novel.

It is an extremely monotonous business, and it speaks well for the human race that the richer members of it, free from the compulsion to work, do not retire to their beds and spend their lives there rather than go on with this perpetual donning and doffing of their pseudo-skins. Possibly, they would have done so if they had not learned to mitigate the monotony by constant changes of fashion. These changes of fashion were obviously the invention of the rich, and even to-day it is noticeable that, the richer you are, the more often you get out of one costume into another.

This brings an element of variety into dress, and where there is variety there is interest. The ups and downs of stocks and shares scarcely excite the human imagination more than the fluctuations of fashion. Every new spring with its new designs of dress is looked forward to as



## TOP HATS

eagerly as if it were Utopia. The Promised Land is for many people a land of the latest frocks. The daffodil and the swallow return each year in due season, but last year's dresses do not return. Here we see an example of perpetual progress—which means running round and round in an enormous circle.

Of the two sexes, it was the male that first began to doubt whether it was consonant with the dignity of immortal spirits to fritter away so much time and thought in pursuit of the latest costume. The man's imagination recoiled from the necessity of perpetually wondering what it would best become him to wear on the various sections of his body, from the top of his head to the tips of his toes. He realized that there was something in life to be thought of besides dressing up, and he set out to devise a costume that might not be ideal but that would continue with only slight changes from season to season, and so would spare him from having to think about clothes even when he was ordering a new suit. Even in the costume that he wears amid the gaiety of parties he demands a more or less unchanging pattern—a uniform distinguishing one year from another and one man from another almost as little as the uniform of a London policeman distinguishes one policeman from another.

His liberty from worries about clothes, however, has not been maintained without a struggle. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, and man has to be eternally on the watch against tailors and other unscrupulous propagandists of



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

innovation in order to be able to go on wearing the clothes he has learned to like. The innovators, it is true, are not very courageous. They know they dare not model themselves on the women's dressmakers, ordering man one year to wear trousers that do not reach to his knees and the next year to wear trousers that he will have to hold up with his hands to prevent the bottoms from trailing in the mud. Not even the most revolutionary tailor has come forward with a proposal for a new pattern of masculine evening dress which would expose the wearer's upper chest and the backbone down to the waist.

The innovators content themselves with trying to undermine the stability of fashion by suggesting trifling changes. They are believers in the thin end of the wedge. Hence, they tell us one year that we must wear spats, and another year that we must not. They rejoice as in a triumph of reform when they have forced us to wear the bottoms of our trousers turned up and sewed in that position so that we cannot turn them down. They vary the shape of evening-dress ties and evening-dress waistcoats. They put a line of braid down the sides of our dress trousers or take it away as the whim seizes them. They change the height of our collars, and give them wings, or remove the wings at will. They tell us whether we must dress by day in linen shirts or shirts of less stubborn material. They put our handkerchief pocket sometimes outside and sometimes inside the jacket. They instruct us whether to wear boots or shoes.



## TOP HATS

With all these changes, however, masculine dress is a sphere in which we have so far been spared the horrors of revolution. Within my own lifetime the dress of women has changed so violently that the women of one generation scarcely seemed to belong to the same species as the women of the generation preceding. The changes in men's dress have been trivial in comparison. I myself dress largely as I dressed in my teens. No longer, I must admit, do I wear a starched shirt by day. I wear a soft collar instead of a linen one that reached nearly to my ears. I wear shoes instead of boots, and a soft hat instead of a cap. But the jacket, waistcoat, and trousers that I wear to-day are of much the same pattern as those I wore in the 'nineties. Trousers have varied in width, making me look like a spindle-shanks one year and giving me the legs of a sailor another; but they have never ceased to be cloth tubes covering me from waist to ankle in the same old way.

The most revolutionary things that have happened to masculine dress during the period, indeed, have been the disappearance of the frock-coat and the decline in popularity of the top hat.

Whether these changes have been for the better I am not certain. I see that a Top Hat Club has been formed at Westminster to celebrate the centenary of the top hat by reviving the fashion for wearing it. I myself do not like wearing a top hat, but I like to see other people wearing top hats. A top hat shining in the June



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

sun is a very beautiful spectacle, suggesting a world of peace, progress, and prosperity in full swing. It is the crown of the successful man. It is true that in its great days it was worn by many men who were much less successful than they looked; but none the less it was essentially the badge of a nineteenth-century society that was conscious of having achieved a stable civilization at last—a moneyed Paradise on which the sun shone. No wonder that those who wore it loved it, so that members kept it on their heads all day in the House of Commons. Lord Hamilton of Dalzell, in a letter to *The Times*, recalls how, forty years ago, most of the members of the Guards Club also wore their top hats indoors in the club, and many even did so at luncheon. This passionate attachment to hats, he suggests, may have been due to the feeling that, if a hat was to preserve its dazzling shine, it was more likely to do so on the head than anywhere else. I doubt the explanation, however. It seems to me that the natural man loves to wear a hat. I have seen an old peasant sitting with a hat on his head at his own fireside. If it had been so glorious a thing as a top hat, instead of the faded wreck it was, I have no doubt he would not only have worn it at the fireside but have gone to bed in it.

There is this to be said for a revival of the custom of wearing top hats, that it is at least the mark of a peace-loving civilization. Top hats are a charm against violence. Gay young men about town have occasionally been tempted to



## TOP HATS

bash them in hours of elation, but the bashing even of a single top hat increases good humour, and none of the really serious riots was ever the work of top-hatted mobs. It is impossible for the ordinary man to feel blood-thirsty in a top hat. He is thinking too much about his hat to risk it in a brawl. I cannot help feeling that if the various revolutionary movements of recent years had gone in for top hats instead of coloured shirts, we should have had a much more peaceful world. Unfortunately, as soon as a man becomes a revolutionary he invariably begins to hate top hats. When you see a revolutionary wearing a top hat you feel pretty sure that the revolution is over.

Hence, I believe that, if the wearing of top hats could be made universal, the outlook for peace would be a great deal brighter. A top hat has to be lived up to, and we should be as loath to disgrace it as a Boy Scout to disgrace his uniform. Unfortunately, modern conditions are against it. You cannot put a top hat under a seat in the cinema without ruffling its sheen. If the crowd at the Cup Final at Wembley wore top hats, either the majority would keep them on their heads and cause a riot by obstructing the view of those behind them or they would keep them on their knees and find them battered out of recognition by the end of the game.

The age of the top hat, I am afraid, is almost over. It is fading before our eyes. We shall be henceforth a soft-hatted world. May our heads be less soft than our hats!



## VI. Street Corner



AFTER dinner I set off to see a film in a southern suburb of London. Noticing a crowd of my fellow-creatures, however, who were drawn into a circle and listening to a young man with a hammer-and-tongs voice, I paused, and I had not listened to twenty words when I knew that there would be no cinema for me that night. The orator was standing on his platform with his back to a street-lamp, so that his face was in shadow: but, even though one got only a vague impression of a brown forelock and a moustache, one could not doubt that the face was that of a man who was thoroughly enjoying himself. He was letting God have it, as it were, with both fists, and challenging the entire hosts of Heaven with their long train of crimes and superstitions.

When I joined the crowd he was concentrating with relish on miracles and exposing the folly of those who prayed for rain or good weather. To illustrate his theme, he told how one Sunday morning he held an atheist meeting in the open air at which not a drop of rain fell. 'That was a miracle,' cried one of the crowd. 'Wait a minute,' commanded the orator, holding up his arm. 'The funny thing was, on my way home I was passing a Roman Catholic church where there was some kind of religious procession with



## STREET CORNER

Cardinal Vaughan or Bourne, or whatever you call him, at the head of it. I stopped to look on. I always like watching religious processions. Well, believe me or believe me not, no sooner did the Cardinal come out on the Church steps than it began to rain.' He paused to laugh. 'Wot do you think the Cardinal did then? Did he pray for the rain to stop? Did he ask God for a miracle? Not him. Two priests following behind him opened a big umberella and held it over his head on the way to his carriage with the rain pouring down on them and drenching them to the skin. What was the need of this if the Bible is true? Why have an umberella if you can have a miracle? Don't Christians believe in the God of Elijah who handed out weather according as you prayed for it? Elijah seems to me to have been a better Christian than the people who believe in him to-day. I like the way he treated the prophets of Bile. He challenged them to bring down fire from Heaven, and when they couldn't do it Elijah got a bit sarky and asked them where was their God. "Peradventure, he sleepeth," he said, "and must be awakened." Then, when the prophets of Bile showed they were no good at miracles, Elijah said "Take them away, and crack them over the coco-nut" just as the priests of the Christian religion would crack freethinkers over the coco-nut to-day if they could.'

An irate man on the edge of the crowd shouted out: 'How much do you get a week for talking like this?' 'Five pounds,' replied the



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

freethinker, sarcastically. 'You're not worth it,' said the Christian. 'Look here,' said the freethinker, 'there's a pub over there; go and have one, if you haven't had one too many already.' Then followed an interchange of insults, some people crying, 'Shut up,' and the Christian muttering 'Swine!' till the speaker announced that it was now time for questions and a collection.

The first question came from a dark, keen-faced, lean-faced young man in a bowler hat. 'Mr. speaker,' he said, 'from a materialist point of view, can you tell me this: When a man dies, what's missing?' The freethinker touched his forelock for inspiration. 'Modern science,' he replied, slowly, 'has established the fact that nothing that exists can ever be destroyed. Therefore, the answer is "Nothing's missing."' 'But surely,' protested the questioner, 'if ever you've seen a dead man you've noticed that he's not the same as a living one. What, I ask you, is missing?' 'And I answer,' replied the speaker, 'that, from the point of view of science, nothing's missing.' 'But what's happened to him?' 'He's dead,' shouted a member of the audience. The speaker grinned cheerfully. 'Yes, he's dead,' he agreed. 'Why does a dead man's beard go on growing?' a ribald onlooker called out. 'What about his toe-nails?' asked another. And amid the pandemonium of interruption the young man in the bowler kept crying: 'You haven't answered my question.' A Jewish lady behind him said angrily: 'He *has* answered it.' Thereupon a long



## STREET CORNER

argument ensued, at the end of which the young man said: 'And, madam, if I may say so with the greatest respect, it was your race that gave us the founder of our religion.' 'But we didn't believe in Him,' said the Jewess. 'No, madam,' said the young man, 'you crucified Him.'

By this time an Irish voice was putting another question. 'How many men has science killed before, during, and since the war?' 'I don't understand,' said the speaker. The Irishman repeated his question. After a pause, the freethinker replied, with slow deliberation: 'Science as science never killed anybody. Science, however, was prostituted to the service of Christian governments backed up by the Christian Churches, and in the name of God millions of men have been done to death by scientific means. The history of Christianity has been a history of murders, rape, and massacres, with the priests on both sides blessing them. Look at the Great War, when every church was turned into a recruiting office.' Babel broke out again, till another spectator put another question: 'What did God say about the man who said that there was no God?' 'God never said anything about him,' said the freethinker, 'but King David called him a fool.' And he went on to point out that in the habit of calling names King David behaved with the typical discourtesy of Christians towards their opponents. 'But, sir,' exclaimed an interrupter, 'don't you know that Hebrew scholars have discovered that the word translated "fool" means



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

only "an ungodly person" in the original Hebrew?" "The men who originally translated the Bible," replied the freethinker, "were good Hebrew scholars, and they wrote "fool". And speaking for myself, I believe that, when King David said "fool", he meant "fool". I don't like these Revised Versions with their twistings and alterations, that are all meant to soften things down and make people believe that religion in the past wasn't so savage as we know it was. The world is getting civilized. Human beings can't be doped so easily to-day with the chains—the clouds—of superstition, so Christians are now trying to civilize even the Bible. It won't do.'

At this point, a friend brought out a pint tumbler of beer from a neighbouring public-house and handed it to the speaker. The liquor shone in the lamplight as he held it up and looked lovingly at it. Then he put it to his mouth and drank it at a draught. As he gave the glass back, he said, with a shake of his head and a broad smile of satisfaction: 'No Christian could drink a pint like that.' He was then asked what freethinkers had ever done for humanity, and he gave as an example the story of how a number of unbelievers subscribed to rescue from an asylum a perfectly sane but recalcitrant priest whom the Church had had certified for its own purposes. 'Where was that?' some one asked. 'Montreal,' he replied. Some one else shouted: 'Where?' 'Montreal,' he said. Then a third voice from the outskirts of the crowd



## STREET CORNER

asked: 'Where, did you say?' 'You blasted idiot, Montreal,' roared the exasperated freethinker—which brought down the house.

An elderly man and a youth followed with a few questions about the First Cause. They appealed to him as a man of science to admit that there could be no effect without a cause, asked him whether the hen or the egg came first, and, if it was the hen, who made the hen. He looked at them contemptuously as they baited him. 'I'm only a self-educated working-man,' he declared, 'and I can't be expected to know as much as a semi-educated member of the Tooting *bourgeoisie*. But, if you ask me——' 'I do ask you,' said the young man; 'and, if you tell me who made the first hen, I'll tell you who laid the first egg.' There were loud shouts from the crowd: 'Who made the hen?' 'Who laid the egg?' 'Yes,' persisted the young man, 'who laid the egg?' 'Mother,' guffawed an elderly reprobate. 'God laid the egg,' declared the freethinker with a fatuous grin.

As the meeting was becoming farcial, and as the hour was growing late, he said it was now time to bring the proceedings to a close. 'I thank you all for your considerate hearing,' he observed in a few valedictory sentences. 'Those of you who have behaved like Christians—well, you don't know any better. I hope you will all be here next Monday evening, Christians and all. Remember, we're here to answer questions. Let our opponents come and talk it out freely. We ask for nothing better than frank and open



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

discussion. Standing here to-night, I repeat my challenge to any of the great leaders of the Christian churches, from Father McNabb to the Pope of Rome, to come and debate the question of religion and freethought any Monday evening at this corner.'

The question that is now agitating the suburb is: Will the Pope accept?

## VII. Storm Troops at Twickenham

AT Twickenham, before the Rugby match between Oxford and Cambridge, people kept telling each other, 'It isn't so cold to-day.' But it was cold enough as one sat in a car in the motor-park, making an anchorite's meal on coffee and tongue sandwiches. As one walked round the back of the stands before the game began one wondered why nobody had ever thought of providing foot-warmers for the spectators at football matches. Strong men in heavy overcoats and mufflers carried rugs on their arms. Rosy clergymen, blue-nosed schoolboys, pretty women, all walked their fastest in order to thaw the ice out of their feet. There was a determined it-isn't-so-cold-to-day cheerfulness written on their faces, however. Many of them must have doubted earlier whether the match could be played, or even if played, seen, so hard was the frost that had bound the earth, so threatening the mist that hung over London and its suburbs. And the ground wasn't so hard, and the mist wasn't so thick, and the day wasn't so cold as they had feared. Hence their exhilaration on one of the most exhilarating occasions in the calendar.

The ground itself, ringed round with the piles of straw that had carpeted it during the frost, had a cold, forbidding look. Yet a strange bird



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

appeared to find it a comfortable place to settle on, possibly associating straw with warmth. Nobody could agree as to what bird it was. The very ignorant said it was a starling. The moderately ignorant guessed a lapwing. It had certainly the round flapping wings of the lapwing, and was almost certainly a bird of the plover family. I am told that there is a plover called the sociable plover. The name is not ill-suited to a bird that chooses as its haunt a field fought over by thirty violent men and a violently whistling referee, and surrounded by forty thousand violently shouting spectators. I am inclined to doubt, however, whether it was any bird known to the ornithologist. More probably it was some ancient Oxford divinity who had decided on this metamorphosis in order to be present at Twickenham and bring luck to an Oxford team that, as things turned out, needed luck badly.

The gods were certainly on Oxford's side. After the first ten minutes any intelligent book-maker would have demanded odds of ten to one on Cambridge. The Cambridge men had flung themselves on the Oxford line with such overwhelming fierceness that it looked as if their weight must in time wear the defence to shreds. Their forwards seemed always to get the ball in the tight scrums, in the loose mauls, in the line-outs. The only hope for Oxford appeared to lie in the ball's reaching that magician among full-backs, Owen-Smith, who by a perfectly judged long kick into touch would regain in two



## STORM TROOPS AT TWICKENHAM

seconds all the ground that Cambridge had won by titanic, body-wearying struggles. I do not think the ball once reached the Cambridge half in the first ten or fifteen minutes till Owen-Smith sent it there from a penalty kick.

The story of the match is really the story of Owen-Smith *versus* Cambridge. If Oxford had had any other full-back in the world except Owen-Smith they would undoubtedly have been beaten on Tuesday. To see Owen-Smith playing football is to feel as Mr. Neville Cardus feels while he is watching Hobbs or Macartney batting. Mr. Cardus as he watches an exhibition of genius on the cricket field is driven in search of an analogy to the airs of Mozart and the playing of the master violinists. I wish I were a musician so that I might invent the right comparison for Owen-Smith. Would it be right if I said that he combines the imperturbable perfection of Schnabel with the trickiness of Puck misleading night wanderers? At one moment he wears an air of rather melancholy stolidity; at the next, he is a zigzag of lightning. To see him running at full speed towards a falling ball and catching it infallibly without a second's slackening of pace, or watching half the Cambridge team bearing down on him and tempting them to exhaust themselves to the last drop of sweat, deceiving the first man by the assumption of one pace and then tricking him by speeding up till you would think his legs were worked by some kind of internal combustion engine, and ultimately finding room



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

to kick the ball so that it will drop into touch far down the field at the exact spot at which he means it to fall, is to see a man doing with absolute perfection what he has set out to do, and to be thrilled by the achievement of genius. Owen-Smith must be one of the most heart-breaking full-backs for a team to play against that have ever been seen on the football field. If Horatius kept the bridge with half the devilish brilliance of Owen-Smith, it is little wonder that he has been remembered in history.

Cambridge on their side had brilliance, too. Little Bowcott, the scrum half, himself scarcely larger than a football, was heroically brilliant as he fell on the ball at the toes of the Oxford men to stop a forward rush. He was brilliant, too, in his swift passes to his outside half, C. W. Jones, slight and fair-haired, who looked elusive enough and inventive enough in his passes to find a way past even Owen-Smith. Seldom can a man have been given so many chances and have given other players so many chances without being rewarded with a score. He made some of the most beautiful runs, being a creature of air and as difficult as air to grasp; he seemed always to have a ready train of running attendants and to pass to the attendant to whom Oxford would least expect him to pass; he tried drop-kicking for goal. But, though at least half a dozen times a little luck would have brought a try and a few inches to the other side of the goal post would have brought a goal, the omen of the strange bird—and Owen-Smith—



## STORM TROOPS AT TWICKENHAM

were against him. It was noticeable that the bird first settled in the Oxford end of the field.

When Cambridge seemed finally to have mastered the Oxford forwards and to have dislodged the bird from its chosen territory for good, Cranmer, the Oxford centre three-quarter, got hold of the ball for almost the first time in the game, charged through man after man on the Cambridge side, kicked the ball over the full-back's head, and raced after it to the goal line. Johnston, of Cambridge, was also racing for the ball and being there first was about to seize it and touch it down when, tricky as Owen-Smith himself, it bounced at an angle at which no ball had ever bounced before, so that Johnston missed it and Nicholson, of Oxford, had only to pounce on it to score. In reason, Oxford had as little chance of scoring that try as you or I have of winning the Irish sweepstake. But this is not a reasonable world. Jackson even kicked a goal, though Oxford have scarcely kicked a goal during the whole of the present season. If any one had said before the match that Oxford would win the game as a result of goal kicking, he would have been looked on as an imbecile. Here, if there were room, one might have a diversion on the unexpectedness of life.

Cambridge, however, continued to win ground, even if they could not win the game. In a few minutes Dick received a pass from Wooler and no Oxford man could lay a hand on him till he reached Owen-Smith, who flung himself at his



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

knees and brought him to the ground. Even in Owen-Smith's grasp, however, Dick was able to wrench his body forward far enough to get the ball safely down an inch over the goal line. As the try was not converted, Oxford were still leading.

As the game continued the apparent mastery of Cambridge increased. Even after their captain was carried off the field as the result of an accident when four men jumped wildly into the air for the ball at the same time, the Cambridge forwards played with a fury that looked irresistible. During most of the second half the Oxford line was in a state of siege. Again and again Cambridge were within four yards of it. Seldom can there have been more heroic and desperate tackling than the tackling of the Oxford three-quarters. Wherever a Cambridge man was running for the line, Warr and Cranmer were there to bring him down and to smother the next player whom the ball reached. In vain did Jones start a movement to break through the right wing: Warr and Lorraine were impassable. Jones would then look for an opening on the left; Cranmer and Rees-Jones were a wall of granite.

Then, having failed to score a try, half the Cambridge side conceived a passion for drop kicks at goal as the only means of getting through the Oxford defence. One of the kicks went so near that every Cambridge man in the crowd was roaring with joy, believing that a goal had been scored. As failure succeeded

## STORM TROOPS AT TWICKENHAM

failure, they groaned with disheartenment. 'It's like a lot of kids throwing stones at a bottle,' one of them said to me in disgust.

Cambridge, indeed, had the terrible experience of labouring like Sisyphus, only to experience Sisyphus's endless disappointment. They went to their work with the blind fury of a bee trying to make its way through a plate-glass window, and with as little result. At last, exhausted by their wasted efforts, they cracked. Owen-Smith, getting possession of the ball, did not kick it, but ran through half the Cambridge team like a hare through a field of cattle. Oxford were now for the first time the real besiegers, and stormed the Cambridge line like men indifferent to wounds. If it had not been for that last five minutes, one would have considered it unfair that Oxford should have won. But, after all, what really happened was that a magnificent attack was beaten by a still more magnificent defence. And by luck. And, perhaps, by the mysterious bird.



## VIII. Questions about Happiness

MRS. CATHERINE CARSWELL, writing in the *News Chronicle*, painted a much more cheerful picture than we usually get of the caged birds in a bird-market. 'Snarers and sellers of small wild birds,' she declared, 'show every sign of loving and cherishing their wares, and you never see a sick bird among them.' I should myself like to see the caging of any birds except those bred in captivity abolished; but, when I read Mrs. Carswell's article, I began to ask myself whether my attitude was due to vague sentimentalism or to certainty as to the life the birds would prefer—life in a cage or the freedom of the air.

There are undoubtedly some birds that look utterly miserable in a cage. The caged eagles on the steps of the Roman Capitol look rebelliously resentful, yet without hope in their rebelliousness, under the stare of the freer bipeds of the streets. The lark in a cage is as eager for escape as a prisoner. Yet there are other birds that sing in cages as joyously as if they were flitting from spray to spray in the Garden of Eden. The street of a Spanish town, with cages hanging outside the houses, resounds with the happiness of birds like a wood in spring. Some enthusiasts for caged birds have made the experiment of leaving the cage-door open so



## QUESTIONS ABOUT HAPPINESS

that the bird might make its choice between imprisonment and freedom. Some time ago a correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* described how he offered this choice to a goldfinch, with the result that it returned and demanded to be allowed to re-enter the cage.

If the cage were large enough—as it seldom is—to permit plenty of freedom of movement, it is possible that some birds would prefer the luxury of captivity to the perils of liberty. In such conditions, the bird has a human being as his servitor to bring him food, to provide him with drink, to keep everything neat and tidy. The free bird enjoys none of this freedom from toil and the fear of cruel enemies. Even while he eats he is on the watch for danger. And how he has to labour like a slave to ward off starvation! One could imagine a very pretty dialogue between a caged bird and a wild bird on the rival merits of confinement and liberty. The preference of confinement by a caged bird would revolt our sense of moral dignity, but from the point of view of a bird in search of an easy life, he might have a good enough case for his choice. I should certainly let him have his cage if he wished it, but I should also, were I dictator, insist that everybody who kept a caged bird other than birds of the canary and parrot families should leave the cage-door open for an hour a day so that no small bird might be kept imprisoned against its will.

If is, of course, extremely difficult to measure the happiness of any animal. Those half-slaves,



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

the domesticated animals, seem as happy as any—perhaps, the happiest of all. Is the wild cat as happy as the cat that purrs beside a Christian hearth? Is the hunger-driven wolf as happy as the dog that bounds into the water after a stick on Brighton beach? Whether sheep and cows and horses are happy one cannot be sure. The young of all farm animals look enormously happy—the lamb bouncing both ends into the air for pure joy, the calf thrusting its nose into a bucket of delicious milk, the foal whinnying round its mother's head as she feeds. But, as the sheep and the cow grow to maturity, what an air of resignation they acquire! What a failure of ecstasy is apparent! An eminent writer once attributed 'beautiful and tranquil thoughts' to a cow. His intuition may have been sound, but to me it seems that he might almost as well have attributed beautiful and tranquil thoughts to a vegetable. As for the horse, certain experts have told us that he takes no pleasure in any of those accomplishments of his that give pleasure to man. Undoubtedly, he enjoys a feed of corn or drinking from a pond after the day's work, or weltering in a field when he is set free for a summer night, but it gives him no pleasure, we are told, to jump at the Dublin Horse Show or to gallop across country after a fox or to win the Derby or the Grand National. He is eternally obedient, but eternally incapable of enjoying his noblest achievements. He clears a hurdle with as little joy as he feels while dragging a plough through the heavy earth.



## QUESTIONS ABOUT HAPPINESS

He wins the Gold Cup at Ascot on the loveliest day of the year amid the cheers of the loveliest crowd on earth, and he is as indifferent to it all as if he were hauling a dray through the streets of Bermondsey. I can scarcely believe this, but, if it is true, it reconciles me to the disappearance of the horse and the invention of the equally unfeeling motor-car.

We know so little about the happiness of animals that we can only guess at it. I sometimes wonder, however, whether we know much more about the happiness of our fellow-human-beings. Take two men, both of whom look equally happy, and, if you question them, you will probably find that one of them will say that he would gladly live his life over again, while the other will declare that not only would he be unwilling to live his life over again, but that he cares so little for life that he would gladly die during the next night's sleep. I have often been puzzled by the indifference to life of men who seemed to be enjoying it far better than I was. They were the best company in the world, humorists, successful in their work, enjoying books, plays, travel, the passing spectacle of the world, food, strong drink, and the conversation of children, yet philosophically they were pessimists who would go to their graves as willingly as one goes to bed after the weariness of a day's tramping.

It may be that, if I shared their indifference to death, I might acquire their pessimistic philosophy about life. But I have always feared



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

death, and, compared with it, the green fields of the world and houses with people talking nonsense in them seem extraordinarily desirable. If I were offered the chance of living my life over again, I feel almost sure that I should jump at it. I should certainly have another go at my childhood. It perplexes me when I read modern novels and autobiographies in which childhood and boyhood are described as periods of misery. Sometimes the misery is due to narrow-minded relatives; sometimes it is due to bullying at school. Even so exuberant a human being as Mr. Winston Churchill looks back on his schooldays as a time of torment. When I was a boy, our elders always assured us that we were now at the happiest stage of human life, and, apparently, they themselves looked back to schooldays that were fuller of pleasures than of pains. The elders of our own day, however, take a less rosy view of their adolescent years. You would imagine from their reminiscences that school had in their time been a kind of Devil's Island. If their evidence is trustworthy, it seems to me that the great boarding-schools ought to be abolished. Day-schools do not, in the same proportion, contain the means of making the young miserable. At least, my school, which was mainly a day-school, did not.

As for cruel and narrow-minded relations, I never suffered from them. I had three generations of relations, exceeding in number the family of the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe, and there was not a monster among them. The



## QUESTIONS ABOUT HAPPINESS

arrival of my grandmother or a visit to my cousins made life brim with happiness. It is all the more surprising that I was happy, since temperamentally I had all the qualifications for a life of misery. Timid, self-conscious, disobedient, given to fits of sullenness, selfish, awkward, envious, incompetent at all the games I loved so well, I had all the ingredients that go to the makings of the leading character in a depressionist novel. But I was happy, or, at least, I remember my periods of happiness more vividly than my periods of misery.

This may be due to a refusal to face the facts—to a self-indulgent habit of thrusting unpleasant things into the background of my memory, and keeping only the pleasant things on the surface in order to enjoy them over again. Certainly I had my portion of unhappiness—grief over the invention of death and Adam's iniquitous idiocy in being tempted by an apple, occasional trembling from the fear of Hell and of the cut-throat agents of the Pope domiciled in my native town, bad temper, humiliation, conscious wickedness. I am not sure, however, that my hours of misery did not make my hours of happiness seem all the happier by contrast.

Have I, then, had a happy life? I do not know, but I have enjoyed the happy part of it. It is impossible to weigh against each other all the moods of one's life, from the suicidal, through grief, to the ecstasies of the seventh circle of Paradise. There were, however, it seems to me, enough good hours to compensate



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

for the bad. Will it be so in the next generation, when the fear of poison-gas bombs has taken the place of the fear of Hell? I am not sure. About the past, I am a sentimentalist looking at things through rose-coloured spectacles; about the future, I am a blind man.

## IX. Reasons for and against Smoking ∞

A BENEVOLENT reader, having seen something I had written on the subject of tobacco, recently sent me a leaflet entitled, "Twelve Plain Reasons Against Smoking". It is the work of an eminent clergyman, and it is published by the British Union of Non-Smokers. For many years past I have been searching for good and effective reasons against smoking. I am sure that such reasons exist and I mean to persevere till I have discovered them. I can honestly say, however, that I have never yet found a reason that persuaded me to give up smoking permanently. When I have given it up temporarily, my motive has nearly always been sordid or selfish. Either I was feeling nervous about my health, or in an access of vanity I wanted to strengthen my character. As soon as I ceased to feel nervous about my health, however, or decided that it was easier to strengthen my character in some other way, there seemed to be no valid reason for further abstinence and I resumed my usual habits.

The twelve reasons given against smoking in the clergyman's leaflet seem to me so unconvincing that if I were a non-smoker I should be tempted after reading them to go out and buy a pipe. I should feel that if the habit of non-smoking led to such illogical thinking, there



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

must be something to be said for a generous use of tobacco. First, we are told, for example, that smoking 'is an unnatural habit, and therefore harmful to the body. Exceptions,' the writer adds, 'prove the rule.' Now, if there is one thing more certain than another, it is that exceptions never proved any rule whatever since the creation of Adam. The existence of an occasional white blackbird does not prove that blackbirds are black. If a Mohammedan gets drunk, this does not prove that all Mohammedans are teetotallers. Every time it occurs, indeed, it weakens the evidence for this assertion. Apart from this, what are we to think of the reasoning of a writer who tells us that smoking 'is an unnatural habit, and therefore harmful to the body'? Why 'therefore'? Is there any proof that unnatural habits are more harmful to the body than natural habits? The moral progress of mankind has been largely the result of the struggle to suppress various natural habits. Fighting is a natural habit which has injured more bodies than all the tobacco that was ever grown. Overeating is a natural habit from the harmful effects of which human beings are saved only by the unnatural habit of swallowing pills and potions. Everything condemned in the Ten Commandments is a natural habit. If we are to return to nature we must first abandon both civilization and religion. To make marks on paper with a pen, and to have other marks representing these printed on the side of a leaflet, is an unnatural habit; and to read them is an unnatural



## REASONS FOR AND AGAINST SMOKING

habit. Because of this, would the author of the leaflet add: 'and therefore harmful to the body'?

It may be that he is a child of nature, but so am not I. There is scarcely a minute of the day in which I could claim to live according to nature. I begin the day by indulging in the unnatural habit of tea-drinking. I spread unnatural butter on my unnatural toast with an unnatural knife. I put unnatural bacon into my mouth with an unnatural fork. During this time I read three unnatural newspapers, and continue to do so while smoking unnatural after-breakfast cigarettes. After a time—for I breakfast in bed—I go into the bathroom, where I take up an unnatural tube of tooth-paste and squeeze some of the paste out on to an unnatural brush. I then take up an unnatural stick of shaving-soap and, having charged another unnatural brush with the stuff, begin to lather my face, where a beautiful natural beard has been growing through the night. With an unnatural instrument known as a safety-razor I mow the traces of nature from my cheeks, throat, and chin. I turn on an unnatural tap from which hot water pours into my bath, and, having plunged my body into this, I dry myself with an unnatural towel. I dress myself in unnatural clothes, and put on a pair of unnatural shoes, carefully tying the ends of the unnatural laces in an unnatural bow. I seize an unnatural hat, and, turning the unnatural handle of the front door, walk down the path into the unnatural street. I go into town



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

on an unnatural Holborn tram and continue the journey on an unnatural bus. Arriving at the office, I open some unnatural letters and dictate replies to a natural human being who is taking all I say down on an unnatural typewriter. And so throughout the day. Nature may be all very well for a wild beast, but it would never enable a civilized human being to earn a living. To say that smoking is an unnatural habit, therefore, seems to me on the whole to be a reason for, not against, the use of tobacco.

What, then, of the second argument advanced by the leaflet? This is that smoking 'is really no use whatever to the mind. In the long run mental labour is injured by it.' What evidence, I wonder, does the writer imagine he possesses for this statement? It seems to me that if one said the exact opposite it would sound equally true. And even if smoking were of no use to the mind, what of that? Is eating duck and green peas of use to the mind? Is it because it is of use to the mind that people play or watch cricket? Are we to banish all physical pleasures from our lives because they put no strain on our intellects? This is surely highbrowism in its most melancholy form. The third reason against smoking is no more convincing. 'It makes a man content with less than his best and utmost in proportion as it gets hold of him.' But here, again, the writer produces no evidence. It has certainly not yet been proved that Stevenson's struggle after perfection of style became feeble as a result of cigarette-smoking. The fact is that smoking may make a man



## REASONS FOR AND AGAINST SMOKING

more contented, but, even though non-smoking makes him more discontented, I have never heard of its turning a bad writer into a good one.

Smoking, we are told further, 'tends to self-indulgence, and so weakens the moral character.' But why should a thing weaken the moral character because it tends to self-indulgence? After-dinner coffee tends to self-indulgence, yet many men drink coffee without apparent loss of character. Arm-chairs tend to self-indulgence, yet I have seen a saint sitting in an arm-chair. If self-indulgence is vicious, why not abolish those orgies of self-indulgence, the summer holidays? But, protests the writer, smoking also 'leads on to selfishness and coarseness, in that it cannot be freely indulged in without constant annoyance to others.' The audacity of this statement takes the breath away. Surely the writer must know that it is the non-smokers—not the smokers—who most constantly cause annoyance to others. No smoker objects to a non-smoker's sitting in a smoking compartment of a train with him. See how the non-smoker fumes, however, if a smoker comes into a non-smoking compartment and lights a cigar. Smokers welcome the presence of non-smokers in the theatres, but what an outcry there is from the non-smokers when the smokers are given the same liberty as themselves—to smoke or not to smoke in the theatre, as they please! All that the smoker asks is equality. This the non-smoker is too selfish to concede, except under compulsion. I once knew a saintly



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

missionary who, when staying in the house of a non-smoker, had to get into the fire-place of his bedroom and smoke his pipe up the chimney. Did a smoker ever force a non-smoker to crouch thus ignobly in a fire-place? When I think of the selfishness of non-smokers—their indifference to the comfort of smokers, their cold-blooded subjection of smokers in many instances to what almost amounts to torture—I am appalled, as when I read of the cruelties of the Inquisition.

I have unfortunately neither space nor time to expose all the fallacies of the writer of the leaflet. I must quote one more passage, however. 'Smoking,' says the writer, 'is intimately connected with drink and gambling. All smokers certainly are not blackguards or criminals; but, with scarcely an exception, all criminals and blackguards are smokers.' I was under the impression myself that some of the most notorious criminals of recent years were non-smokers and teetotallers. It is a well-known fact, too, that in the ancient world in which the entire population were non-smokers, crime of the most horrid type was rampant. It was a non-smoker who committed the first sin and brought death into the world and all our woe. Nero was a non-smoker. Lady Macbeth was a non-smoker. Decidedly, the record of the non-smokers leaves them little to be proud of.

Yet there must be some sound arguments against smoking. I wish the writer of the leaflet could have thought of them. I wish I could think of them myself; for I do really want to give it up.



## X. Facts are Deceptive ♡ ♡ ♡

A GREAT man of science startled a meeting the other day by stating that it was unsafe 'to place reliance on observational facts unless they were confirmed by theory'. Unluckily, it is not only in science that facts can be misleading. In our daily lives we constantly find that our observation tells us one thing while our intelligence tells us another. The wise man learns to beware of becoming the victim of the facts that are staring him in the face.

This necessity was brought home to me lately when I drove from London to Scotland and back again, stopping at various places on the way. What evidences of prosperity were spread on all sides under the blazing sun! Here surely—for I set out on a Sunday—was the joy in widest commonalty spread that was foretold as the result of the ideal revolution. Poverty seemed as far off as rain. All the world was enjoying the luxury of wheels. Motor-cars, motor-bicycles, and push-bicycles were so abundant that only a nation with a vast superfluity of wealth could possibly have afforded them. Along the roadside new towns were springing up with neat little villas surrounded by flowering gardens on which leisurely householders had expended infinite pains. Everybody whom one passed was well, if not beautifully, dressed. There were



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

no barefooted children, no ragged elders. The girls of the poorer classes copied the vanities of the girls of the richer. The children, their faces radiant with summer health, played in the streets as happily as if Queen Victoria had still been reigning. I am sure that no foreigner making the same journey as I did could have come to any other conclusion on the evidence of his eyes than that England is at present enjoying such prosperity as few nations have ever known.

An astonishing number of people seemed to be able to spend large sums of money. When I went in to dinner at the chief hotel in a large provincial town, the head waiter brought two menus, one for dinner à la carte, the other for table d'hôte, and, as he placed the latter before me, he said, 'The dinner is ten and six.' I had noticed in the A.A. handbook that the price of dinner at the hotel was given as six and six, and I told the waiter so. 'Oh, yes,' he agreed, 'but that is in the other room, which is closed; I can do you a short dinner for six and six, if you prefer it.' Here again, surely, was evidence of widespread prosperity if provincial railway-hotels could maintain themselves on a flow of customers willing to pay ten and six for a by no means perfect dinner. I had thought that one had only to go north of the Humber in order to be certain of seeing misery walking the streets and of being in full view of the great depression. But neither in the hotel nor in the streets could I see any marked difference between England in a period of depression and England in a



## FACTS ARE DECEPTIVE

period of affluence. It is true that there seemed to be fewer motor-cars in the north than in the south, but on the whole the surface of life that was visible to a passing stranger was that of a rich and prosperous country, with more pleasures within reach of the common man than ever before in history.

I knew that what I saw could not be the truth, or, at least, that it could not be the whole truth. I knew that I had only to call on a man in touch with the real life of the town, to go with him among the mean streets, to visit those quarters in which the workless stand about or walk about during the working hours, to go inside a Labour Exchange, in order to see a perfectly different England from what I was seeing. My point is, however, that it is possible to travel from the south to the north of England without ever having the truth about the lives of some millions of one's fellow-creatures forced upon one's attention. I had thought that in certain towns in Lancashire and in such places as Newcastle and Glasgow it was impossible to avoid the spectacle of poverty and misery. But then, when I visited those places some years ago, I deliberately went in search of poverty and misery, knowing that they were there. I am not now certain that if a complete stranger went to Manchester during the week in which the Manchester November Handicap is run he would be compelled by what he saw to realize that the cotton trade has been in a bad way for years. What might be called the shop-front of English



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

civilization remains extraordinarily prosperous-looking. Unless one goes into certain mining districts or into the slums, one's chief impression of the English people is that they are a cheerful, well-dressed, shop-loving, cinema-going, holidaying race, to a point that in the middle of last century would have seemed to indicate the height of prosperity.

I do not wish to suggest that the evidence for this which meets the casual visitor's eyes is entirely untrue. Undoubtedly the distribution of comfort is now more general than it ever was before. At the same time, the evidence of the eyes is misleading. The fact that the number of the unemployed runs into seven figures is even more significant than the fact that the cinemas are crowded and that the democracy wastes as much of its imagination on clothes as the aristocracy. This fact, however, can be learnt from statistics, and, of all facts, statistics make the least permanent impression on the ordinary man. Perhaps this is fortunate, since statistics seem to have become permanently gloomy. It may be that it is a good thing for even the economist occasionally to reassure himself by turning away from the hideous truth of statistics to the fallacious evidence of his eyes.

If the casual visitor sees little of the truth about a country he knows, how little can he see in a country that is all but new to him! If I go to Italy on a holiday, for example, I see nothing to suggest that it is not one of the



## FACTS ARE DECEPTIVE

happiest countries on earth. I know from other evidence that the Press is not free, and that one must not criticize Mussolini openly in a crowded railway carriage as one could criticize Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in England. But after I have crossed the frontier, and have seen a young Fascist examining the newspapers in the bag of an Italian traveller, and groping under the seat in search of smuggled treason, I see nothing to persuade me that I am not as free as if I were at home. Merely as a holiday-maker, I am as free under Fascism as I should be if the Italian Liberals were in power. People tell me that there is great poverty and discontent under the surface; but the holiday-maker does not see them. So sunny is the surface of life that one is tempted at times to wish one had been born an Italian. Yet what intelligent human being could base his opinion of the condition of Italy on a holiday-maker's impressions? Reason tells him that the suppression of free opinion is the mark of a return to an unhappier age, and that, whatever benefits a dictatorship may bring, it is maintained by persecution or the threat of persecution. It will be seen, therefore, that it is our theories, and not the facts we see, that ultimately determine our opinion of the state of a foreign country. This explains the difference of opinion, for example, which has often been remarked on in people who have visited Russia. I have heard both the most cheerful and the gloomiest accounts of Russia from returned visitors, and both the cheerfulness and the gloom,



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

I imagine, were due to theories formed before the visits took place. It was the same in regard to Ireland in the days of Gladstone. The Unionist English visitor saw a totally different Ireland from the Home Rule visitor. He saw a country that had little to complain about—that would not have complained about anything, indeed, if it had not been for political agitators. The Home Rule visitor, on the other hand, saw a land even more miserable than it actually was.

This, unhappily, proves that theories may be as misleading as facts, and the logical conclusion seems to be that we can never learn the truth about any country in any way at all. I do not think, however, that we need be driven to so pessimistic a position as this. We can learn a considerable amount of truth about a country if we remain sufficiently sceptical in regard both to theories and to facts. We must distrust the evidence of our eyes till we are sure that our eyes have not missed more important facts than they have seen. We must be ready to alter our theories, or at least to question them, if the evidence of facts contradicts them. And, even after we have altered them, it is wise to distrust them still.

I myself, I confess, am incapable of discovering the truth about the present condition of England. I do not know whether the country is, as they say, on the edge of an abyss, or whether, as others put it, she is making full steam ahead for prosperity. All I know is that, if she is on the edge of an abyss, she does not

## FACTS ARE DECEPTIVE

look the part. Elderly men, looking back on a security that is past and looking forward to a future that is doubtful, have said to me that they were glad not to be young, but to have been born in a happier age than the present. It may well be, however, that the world has only begun to be wealthy and that within the present century it will begin even to be wise. Who knows? I do not. But, at least, to the eye of a holiday-maker, England with all her miseries looks like a country in which leisure and pleasure are increasing. Appearances may be deceptive, but, till we turn back to statistics, they are reassuring.



## XI. Surprise in Spain      ~      ~      ~

GUIDE-BOOKS were never favourite reading of mine. I cannot penetrate those thickets of fact without exhaustion. My mind shrinks before unending courses of names and dates. The writers of guide-books seem to believe that there is no limit to one's interest in the details of museums and churches. They incite us to look at pictures abroad that we should not think worth a glance at home. And they try to shepherd us into enthusiasms which we should be much more likely to experience if we were left free to make our own discoveries. I like to have a guide-book in my bag when I travel, but I prefer as a rule not to read it till I get home, when I can sit down at leisure and see how many things I have missed.

Fortunately, when I was going to Spain the other day, a friend gave me a rather unconventional guide-book, which made no attempt to anticipate the raptures natural to a visitor in a foreign country if left to himself. At least, the author quoted enough in disparagement of the most beautiful towns in Andalusia to give the reader a delightful surprise when the reality rose before him. How pleasant it is to be told that Cordoba has no good hotel and that the town is a 'neglected churchyard' with 'something stifling' in the atmosphere, and then to find



## SURPRISE IN SPAIN

oneself in a capital of flower-filled patios, brilliant as the sun that shines on them, with men and women, mules and donkeys, moving through the streets in a perpetual decoration, with a guide of the tenderest historical eloquence to take one through the forest of the horseshoe arches in the mosque, with 'little eagles' soaring and swifts screaming above and goldfinches singing below, and with as excellent a hotel as a man descending stiffly from a long journey by motor-coach could desire! If I had been told in advance that Cordoba was incomparably and flawlessly beautiful I should probably have been disappointed, for no town on earth can live up to such a description. As it was, preliminary disparagement gave an edge to one's delight, and, if the motor-coach had not been waiting, I could have remained happily among that unhurrying population in its setting of white-washed houses and tiled roofs for—no, not for ever, but for at least a week.

The same guide-book was equally serviceable as regards Granada. It began with a warning against the Alhambra Palace Hotel, that odd building that rises like a cliff on the hill above the city. 'I have never been in a hotel I liked less,' declares the writer, 'nor known one concerning which I have heard so much complaint from fellow-travellers.' Either the hotels of Spain must have vastly changed since the guide-book was written, or the author must be harder to please than I, for I have seldom been in a hotel I liked better. This may have been largely due



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

to the fact that from the balcony of a third-floor bedroom there is such a prospect to be seen as must be rare in any European city. On the evening of my arrival the new moon and the stars were shining, and far beneath one the city, with its innumerable lamps, had the appearance of a second host of stars. By day the rich plain could be seen stretching on all sides to the mountains, the snowy tops of the Sierra Nevada above, the palms below spreading their leaves in a South Seas languor of sunshine. All day long countless swifts—the swift appears to be the bird of Spain—screamed around and pursued insects to the very wood of the window-sashes, which they struck with their bills. A Swede, who was unaccustomed to such birds, asked me: ‘Do you have black swallows in England, too?’ One day a swift was caught either in a hole above my window or, being young, was too timid to begin flying at so precipitous a height: whereupon another swift flew up to it and, seizing a wing in its claws, attempted to drag the helpless bird from the hole. A third swift followed with a similar effort, and at last, amid screams of triumph, the bird was dislodged and off insect-hunting with his companions.

Granada, however, is not only a city of swifts, but a city of cocks. An hour before midnight all the cocks of Granada begin crowing at the foot of the Alhambra, and, with a brief interval, continue to crow through the night. Such a rivalry of virile song is very charming to one who is not a resident but a visitor, blended as it



## SURPRISE IN SPAIN

is with the Andalusian love-songs of late home-goers.

As for the Alhambra itself, the guide-book fortunately quoted a disparaging description which prepared one for an orgy of meretricious frippery. It is difficult, however, to look on anything that has lasted so long as frippery—on anything that has not only lasted a very long time, but is a monument to one of the great hours of European history. I know astonishingly little history for a middle-aged man, but some inherited partisan pleasure stirs in me in presence of the last Moorish stronghold that fell to the Christians. I do not know why I should be glad that the Christians took Granada, because, according to one of my guide-books, they behaved to the Moriscos as Hitler is behaving to the Jews, and ruined it. 'Under the Christians,' it declares, 'Granada fell on evil days; religious intolerance, culminating in Philip III's expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609, robbed it of its most industrious and most useful citizens, and the lost glory was never recaptured.' Yet, narrow-minded as I am, I cannot help always being on the side of the Christians at an historical crisis. What scoundrels they often were, and how charming, according to many accounts, the peoples they conquered were! Yet, after all, the Christians were Christians—of sorts. If they had been defeated, how we should have idealized them!

Not that I do not sympathize with the Moors as I wander through the sunny courts of the



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

Alhambra and among the fountains and gardens of the Generalife higher up the hill. They were so obviously lovers of sunshine and shade and flowers and flowing water and colour and enchanting prospects. They may not have given their fettered Christian prisoners a good time, but they gave themselves—at least, the rich and powerful among them—a very good time. To turn a fortress into a palace of play and prettiness showed a certain innocence of heart. All those little cups of ceiling with their pendent decorations of painted wood and plaster are the perfect adornment of a pleasure-house. It is, perhaps, nature rather than art to which the Alhambra owes most of its beauty—the eminence on which it is built, the mountains in the distance seen from all points, the blue sky and the sun overhead. But it was a race of artists who constructed a building to be so cunning a trap for natural beauty. It was a race of artists, too, who made the gardens of the Generalife with prospects lovelier still, with fountains playing and with water flowing down the top of a balustrade on each side of a flight of steep steps, where nightingales sing above the myrtles and oleanders. One can understand Boabdil's emotion—see guide-book—when the Christians had driven him out from this paradise and he wept as he looked back at the courts and gardens he had lost. 'Weep not like a woman,' said his mother sternly, 'for what you could not defend like a man.' It was a hard saying, considering that a weakling even more than a



## SURPRISE IN SPAIN

warrior was likely to feel perpetually secure in that fortress of fountains and nightingales.

As for Ferdinand and Isabella and Columbus, who are among the many ghosts of the Alhambra, they are great names, and some day I must read about them; but it was the Moors, not the Christians, who made the best of Granada. There is some Christian art in the Cartuja that seems like a dip into Hell after the enchanted gardens on the hill. I have often heard of the things Catholics once did to Protestants, but never before had I seen such bloody representations of the things Protestants once did to Catholics. Belfast and Granada ought to exchange pictures—a few old-fashioned Belfast election-posters against the paintings in the Cartuja. How amiable the garden-loving Moors seem in comparison with these pictured butchers! I should almost have been tempted to become pro-Moor if I had not seen the fetters of the Christian slaves rusting on the outer wall of the Cathedral at Toledo. A bad lot, these human beings—intolerable if it were not for the many excellent things they have left behind them!



## XII. Getting Things Done

MR. CLENNELL WILKINSON, referring the other day to the often-heard remark that what we need is a Mussolini or another Cromwell, asked why on earth anybody should want a man like Cromwell. A correspondent immediately replied: 'The answer is a simple one. He succeeded, where others failed, in getting things done.' There is a positive craze for getting things done sweeping over the world to-day. It does not seem to matter much what the things are so long as somebody gets them done. Thus in one country the man who gets things done is the man who gets Jews hit over the head with rubber tubing. In another he is the man who gets peasants torn from their farms and sent to work as exiles in distant places not of their own choosing, but of his. It is sometimes very difficult to see the difference between getting things done and getting people done in. The man who gets things done is not, as a rule, afflicted with humanity. He is so bent on getting somewhere that he has no time to consider the feelings of the people he knocks down on the way there. I wish I knew enough history to be able to expose the pretensions of the men who got things done in the past. Perhaps, however, it would be useless, for the men who got things done, from Cleon to Napoleon, will always have



## GETTING THINGS DONE

their defenders simply because they got things done.

I dislike men who get things done, because one of the first things they always do in modern times is to muzzle writers. Give a man dictatorial powers and he immediately thinks what a fine piece of work it would be to suppress a few newspapers. Now, newspapers may be an evil, but I doubt if they are as great an evil as men who gets things done, and if either must be suppressed, I should infinitely prefer the suppression of the latter. All the people who get things done, I notice, have a mania for destroying things. They must destroy free institutions or libraries or churches in order to get rid of their superfluous energy. Satan finds some mischief still for active hands to do. It would, of course, be unfair to suggest that the strong men of politics have no positive aim in their frenzied activities; but I cannot help thinking that what many people admire in them is less their ultimate purpose than their frenzied activities. The strong man pleases the imagination much as the gangster of the films does. Nearly everybody except the poets believes that life proceeds at much too slow a pace and that we should be far happier if it were made more dramatic. 'Let's do something,' they cry; and when a strong man claps his opponents in jail they applaud him as though he had done as good service to the community as the village blacksmith.

You can judge how much of the admiration of the strong man is due to his destructiveness



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

from the way in which many people express their enthusiasm for Cromwell. There is nothing for which they commend him more ardently than for saying, 'Take away that bauble.' That was getting things done. I cannot myself see why it should be getting things done to remove the mace from the House of Commons but not getting things done to leave it there. Yet leaving the mace where it is does not somehow fire the imagination. All the English statesmen who have left the mace in its usual place—Peel, Disraeli, and Gladstone—seem feeble politicians in comparison with the giant who had the strength of mind to order its removal. Mr. Churchill, I am sure, owes his appeal to many ardent spirits to the feeling that he is the only Englishman living who is capable at a crisis of doing something about the mace. Yet in itself there is nothing more admirable in removing the mace than in burning down Westminster Abbey. Would a man who set fire to Westminster Abbey, however, be regarded as a man of action, and must we who refrain from burning it down be content to be looked on as stick-in-the muds incapable of action? There seems to me to be much to be said for the man of inaction. The man of inaction has preserved many fine buildings, many fine institutions, many fine libraries, many fine gardens. One of them, Abraham Lincoln, even won the American Civil War.

It would, I admit, be possible to carry one's admiration for the man of inaction too far. The craving for getting things done is balanced



## GETTING THINGS DONE

in most of us by the craving for leaving things undone; and the more comfortable we are, the more the temptation to leave things undone is likely to grow on us. At the same time, the history of Fabius Cunctator, known also as the Lamb, is a permanent warning to us that we must be particularly on our guard against the man who gets things done. As every schoolboy knows so dilatory were the tactics of Fabius in the war against Carthage that all Rome denounced him and called for a man who could get things done. Such a man was Minucius Rufus, who got things done so effectively that Fabius had to extricate him from disaster. Later on, in the absence of Fabius, other men who could get things done lost the Battle of Cannae in the most practical fashion possible. If posterity's estimate of Fabius is just, it looks as though occasionally the best way to get something done may be to keep the men who get things done from having anything to do with it.

I do not know the Platonic Dialogues well enough to be able to say whether Socrates ever conversed with an advocate of the gospel of getting things done. He would certainly, had he had the opportunity, have examined him closely as to what things should be done, and as to whether he thought that it mattered by what means they were done, and he would have concluded by compelling him to agree that what the virtuous man must desire is to have the right things done at the right time and in the right way. Possibly he would have exposed



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

him in the course of the argument as a man whose inmost longing was not for justice but for a theatrical way of living. Do not suppose that I am speaking of the great reformers, the men and women who are outraged by the continuance of a plague of poverty in a world of plenty, and who are unselfishly devoting their energies to the work of building a civilization in which such things are impossible. Do not even suppose that I am speaking of Mussolini, or Stalin, or Hitler. I am thinking rather of that enormous number of men and women who have an unholy craving to be led by a strong, ruthless man, and who go about saying, 'What we want is a Mussolini' or a Cromwell or some other dictator. These men and women, I am convinced, are inspired largely by a passion for the theatrical. They want a leader who can make life more exciting for them. Many of them are in revolt, less against anything in the framework of society than against the dullness of their own lives. They have lost the taste for the politics of the four-wheeled-cab kind, and long for motor-racing-track politics, which will bring sensational thrills into public life.

If I were a candidate without any political convictions and eager only to get into Parliament, I think I should publish an election-poster announcing that my policy was a policy of action, and should leave the electors to guess what, if any, were the other items of my programme. In every speech I should say: 'What we need is a man who can get things done. Is the Prime



## GETTING THINGS DONE

Minister such a man? Is Mr. Lansbury such a man? No. Ladies and gentlemen, if you do me the honour of returning me to the House of Commons I promise you I will make it my first and only business, from the moment I enter it, to get things done. We have had enough of words, words, words. What we want is not words but deeds. What most of us feel is that it is time this great Empire got a move on. There can be no standing still. My policy is a policy of Forward, and my motto is "Action, action, action!" The present crisis calls, as all great crises have called, for a Man. Send twenty Men to the House of Commons, and that old lady will begin to sit up. What we've got to do, ladies and gentlemen, is to get together, and when we've got together it must follow, as the night the day, that we'll get things done. Let us all put our shoulders to the wheel. Let us step on the gas. Let us, if necessary, get rid of the brake. Forward, ladies and gentlemen, to a new and better world!' I do not imagine that I could get away with this fatuous speech myself. I am convinced, however, that, if a man could be found who was fool enough to be able to believe what he was saying, and if he uttered just such empty phrases, bawling them out at the top of a powerful voice, with his eyes bulging out of their sockets and the veins standing out on his temples, he would in time gather a great crowd round him and end as a Member of Parliament. For what we need is a Man. Only if we discover a Man can we be sure of getting things done. And so forth.



### XIII. Pronunciation      ~      ~      ~

**P**RONUNCIATION is a matter in regard to which feeling usually runs high. It is as though mankind, having invented articulate speech, realized that it would be useless unless there was a general agreement to use more or less the same sounds to indicate the same things. Even the displacement of the accent is sometimes enough to make a word unintelligible to the hearer. When I was in Madrid last spring, for example, I asked a taxi-driver to take me to the Palace Hotel. He said that he had never heard of it, and a number of other taxi-drivers whom he consulted professed to be equally ignorant, though my friends and I repeated the words several times with the usual English pronunciation. At last, intelligence dawned in the taxi-driver's features, and he cried: 'Ah, Pah-láss.' The difference in pronunciation was slight, but it was enough to prevent understanding. Probably, if a Spaniard came to London and asked to be directed to the Pah-láss Theatre, he would have to repeat his inquiry several times before he was understood.

If difficulties of this kind arise between citizens of different countries over a slight change in the sound of a word, it is no wonder that human beings aspire after a standard pronunciation which will reduce as far as possible the



## PRONUNCIATION

chances of misunderstanding. Because of this aspiration, even children greet a mispronounced word with mockery. The reading class in an infants' school can be thrown into fits of laughter by the mispronunciation of a word. At a later stage, such pronunciations as 'vehemminent' for 'vehement' or 'detterminded' for 'determined' are greeted with superior and joyful derision. The convention of speech is one of the first conventions that the child learns to respect. And in this the child obeys a wise instinct, since speech is merely a collection of conventional sounds, in dealing with which originality of pronunciation is usually a mark of sheer ignorance.

It is true that the child's scorn of pronunciation other than his own arises partly from his habit of regarding everything unusual as funny. Many English children think the Scottish kilt funny, and French gesticulations funny. I myself, growing up in Belfast, looked on the perfectly correct pronunciations of English visitors as funny. They seemed to me to call Ireland 'Ahland' and water 'watah'. As for their attempts to pronounce some of the place-names of Ulster, such as Ahoghill, it was one of the joys of my infancy to listen to them. I have heard Englishmen mispronouncing even such simple names as Coleraine, Strabane, and Donegal. Some writers have attributed the tendency to laugh at mispronunciations to snobbery or to a sense of class superiority. That, they say, is why we laugh at the Cockneyisms of Sam Weller and his father and the brogue



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

of Mulvaney. I believe this to be nonsense. I felt no class superiority to the English visitors whose pronunciations amused me. I regarded Englishmen, on the contrary, with a religious reverence in comparison with which Mr. Kipling's Imperialism seems half-hearted. The comedy of mispronunciation is, it seems to me, though touched with derision, largely the comedy of the unexpected. For example, I saw nothing comic in the familiar mispronunciations of my nurse. She said 'poalisman' for policeman, called bread 'braid' and tea 'tay', and said 'advértise' and 'advertisement' in the old-fashioned way. To me it was the accent of Oxford, not the accent of Ballymacarret, that seemed funny. Only on the assumption that I had an inferiority complex which made me hostile to Oxford could this be interpreted as a form, if an inverted one, of snobbery.

Derision of unusual pronunciations, however, can be justified even on utilitarian grounds. We want to live in a world of mutual understanding, and we feel that, for this purpose, it does not much matter how we pronounce words so long as we all pronounce them in the same way. Feeling this, we long for an authority which will settle for us the best pronunciation of the age. Not that we desire a dictator of speech. What we want is a dictionary-maker who will tell us how words are usually pronounced and spelt by educated men and women in our own time. It may be argued that the speech of educated people is no purer than the speech of the Somerset



## PRONUNCIATION

peasantry; but, as their vocabulary is larger and more in harmony with the vocabulary of literature, most people have agreed to accept the speech of the educated classes as the standard of correct speech. Without some such agreement, no one would dare to compile a pronouncing dictionary. Or, rather, perhaps, we should have scores of dictionaries—an Oxford Dictionary, a Cockney Dictionary, a Devonshire Dictionary, a Yorkshire Dictionary, an Anglo-Welsh Dictionary, and so forth, all of them recommending different pronunciations of words, especially in regard to the vowel sounds.

I, though I cannot pronounce English correctly, am glad of the existence of a standard to which everybody is supposed to approximate. Without such a standard there would be perpetual confusion in the English-speaking parts of these islands. Even as it is, differences of accent in English are constantly leading to misunderstanding. I remember how, many years ago, a friend of mine, an art-student, came to live in lodgings in London, and how, one day, feeling a little out of sorts, he told his landlord that he had a headache. He pronounced the word as it is commonly pronounced in Belfast, 'heddick'; and it required a long conversation, much of it at cross-purposes, before he could rid his landlord of the idea either that he had eaten a haddock which had made him ill or that he was asking to be given a haddock for breakfast next morning. I think I have told somewhere before of a similar difficulty in which



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

I myself was involved as a result of conflicting pronunciations, when I first came to London. Suffering from a sore throat, I went into a little chemist's shop in the neighbourhood of Euston and asked for some pine pastilles. The chemist was extremely Cockney in his speech, and, obviously thinking that when I said 'pine' I meant 'pain', he asked me, 'Wot sort of a pine do you want them for?' I said that I didn't want them for a pain, but merely wanted a tin of pine pastilles. 'Yes,' he persisted, 'but wot I'm asking you is, where have you got this pine?' If I had been readier-witted, I should have replied, 'I have a pine in my throat.' But I never thought of it, and in despair I had to change the word and the thing to glycerine.

A standard pronunciation would free us from difficulties of that kind. I do not much care whether Englishmen decided to pronounce pain 'pane' or 'pine', provided that they all pronounce it in the one way or the other. I hold, however, that there should be a fairly rigid standard of correct speech, and that all clergymen, actors, public speakers, and B.B.C. announcers should be expected to conform to it.

How, then, are we to discover this standard except in the norm of educated speech? Reformers may wish to amend speech so as to restore the long 'e' to 'ethics' and the long 'o' to 'Socrates'; but most of us are content to as accept the established usage, even if it began a mispronunciation. Being of the same mind as the majority, I cannot help feeling that Mr.



## PRONUNCIATION

Bernard Shaw and his fellow-members of the committee that advises the B.B.C. about the pronunciation of English are going the wrong way about their business. They seem to believe that what is wanted of them is, not to discover how words are actually pronounced by good speakers, but—in some cases at least—how the present pronunciation could be improved for broadcasting purposes. Mr. Shaw definitely lays it down that, for the purposes of wireless and the telephone, 'we have to get rid not only of imperfect pronunciations but of ambiguous ones'. To my mind, if this is true of wireless, it must be equally true—much truer indeed—of ordinary life. If it is important to pronounce 'immanent' with the accent on the second syllable for the sake of clarity when a trained announcer speaks the word into a microphone, how much more necessary is the new pronunciation among the echoes of the Albert Hall or amid the deafening chatter of a dean's dinner-table! Yet the reformed pronunciation happens to be wrong, and it is not the business of the B.B.C. to broadcast wrong pronunciations into the homes of the innocent.

Some of the reforms recommended by Mr. Shaw's committee cannot even be defended on the ground that they get rid of ambiguity. 'Despicable' and 'disputable', with the accent on the first syllable, when articulated clearly, bring no cloud of misunderstanding into the mind of the hearer. Mr. Shaw even maintains that 'decadent' should be pronounced with the



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

accent on the second syllable, for aesthetic reasons. The answer is that it isn't.

Mr. Shaw, however, is a born nonconformist. His genius is the richer for his nonconformity; but the genius of the artist, which is individualistic, is essentially different from the talent of the authority on speech, which is submissive to authority and a slave to evidence. We do not ask a dictionary-maker to tell us how he thinks 'tomato' ought to be pronounced, but how it is actually pronounced by good speakers. In the same way, we do not want Mr. Shaw and his fellow-committeemen to tell us how 'Conduit Street' would be pronounced in their ideal world. All that we ask of them is to find out how 'Conduit Street' is pronounced in England in the year 1934.<sup>1</sup>

Unless the committee accepts the best contemporary speech as the standard of pronunciation, a door will be open to all kinds of changes based on mere caprice. The committee may one day decide that 'plough' and 'though' and 'hough' and all words ending in 'ough' should be pronounced so as to rhyme with 'enough'. For the sake of euphony they may call Leicester Square 'Lie-cess-ter Square' and restore the 'w' sound to Chiswick. That is the worst of original genius. No man of genius ought ever to be allowed to sit on a committee. If he is, he will get things done even if they are the wrong things.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lloyd James, however, defends 'Con-dew-it Street' on the ground that that is how it is usually pronounced in the street itself.



## XIV. The Old Prison      ♪      ♪      ♪

‘OR the Old Prison House.’ Thus a Sunday-paper advertisement announced the alternative name of a house for sale—a house in which I once lived. I do not know what kind of prisoners were kept there, or what were their punishments within those thick walls: it was a house that had outlived dynasties, but most of the evil in its history had been forgotten. There was an owl that lived between the ceiling of the top room and the roof and stumbled noisily about among the rafters in the small hours like the ghost of a captive in medieval armour, and there was a cook for a brief season who made us feel that we were living under the thumb of a jailer, sending us up uneatable dishes that we dared not leave uneaten. The cook certainly frightened us: we suspected her, indeed, of being a dangerous criminal of the male sex disguised and on the run: that, however, may have been the effect of her dishes on the imagination. Apart from the owl and the cook, the shades of the prison-house had been dissipated by time.

Never till I went to live in the house had I lived in the country all the year round. The country till then had been to me a place of long summer visits, of occasional Christmas or Easter holidays, of idle walks on Saturdays and Sundays. The custom of closing the schools in the



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

second half of summer may have something to be said for it, but it has this disadvantage that the town child grows up, as a rule, without much chance of becoming intimate with the country in the full bloom and variety of the year. August is a fine month, but May and June are finer. If it is good for boys and girls to leave off learning Latin and Greek for long spells, it would surely be best that they should do this when the trees are full of singing birds and the nests are full of eggs and the whole world is a garden. For myself, even as a boy, I knew the song of the yellow-hammer, for he sang through the summer; and in town, as I lay awake at dawn, I could listen to half the birds from Noah's Ark singing in the garden. But most of the common birds I could not have identified either by eye or by ear, and I was no more learned about flowers or even about trees. I was a child of the streets, not of the fields, and I had all but settled down into the condition of a lifelong ignoramus when I went to live at the Old Prison House.

I am, no doubt, still an ignoramus: I can never go deep into botany and ornithology. But at least I have spent days and weeks and months in the country, and have sat under my own sycamore—at a reasonable rent—listening to the willow-wren. I do not know who had planted the sycamore in the centre of the one little square of green lawn in the garden behind the house. It was an insane thing to do, as the sycamore is one of the few trees under which it



## THE OLD PRISON

is uncomfortable to sit. It is a charming tree at the time of its first flowering, but no sooner has one noticed this than it begins to drop a gentle rain, sticky as honey, on everybody and everything under its branches. At the same time, this sycamore was the most beautiful of all sycamores: it was lit up by the presence of a bird and a song so enchanting that, as one watched and listened, one could almost have believed that the miseries of mankind were an illusion. I do not think that, before that time, I could have recognized a willow-wren; but to lie in a hammock and to be sung to by one, sunny morning after sunny morning, was to be convinced that, of all the birds that visit these islands, the willow-wren's song is the loveliest. He himself is as graceful as his song: he is the very spirit of the leaves and the sunlight that is scattered through them. He is brief; he is repetitive: but what a perfect shape of song! If I had not gone to live in the country I should never have known this. I should have heard the first willow-wren singing in the garden at Hampstead without recognition and without excitement, for it is an odd fact that one has to know the names of birds in order to enjoy their songs to the full. There is an entrancement of discovery, but the entrancement is not complete till it has been fixed in a word, a name, that will remain in the memory. To remember having heard an unknown bird singing exquisitely does not give us the same pleasure as to remember having heard a definite bird—a willow-wren,



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

a wren, a blackbird, or a nightingale—singing exquisitely. Savages attribute a magic influence to names. They believe that to know a child's name is to possess power over it. Whether or not it is the possessive instinct in us that is gratified by the knowledge of the names of birds, there is no doubt that the knowledge of their names immensely increases our pleasure in their songs.

It may be contended that we could acquire a great amount of this knowledge without ever going outside London. You need not go beyond Hampstead Heath to discover the cuckoo, the jay, the kingfisher, the redwing, the nuthatch, the carrion crow, and scores of other birds. You can find the spotted flycatcher and the lesser spotted woodpecker in Kew Gardens. At Richmond, herons and grebes and green woodpeckers are almost common. This is perfectly true, but it is also true that the townsman has so many distractions that he seldom spends the whole day lolling in the garden or wandering on heaths and in parks. He has so much to do that he can do nothing very much. I should feel restless after an hour or so in a deck-chair in a town garden. In the country, on the other hand, I am content to sit lazily in a garden, if not exactly from sunrise, at least from the time at which I rise myself, till sunset and after. This gives the birds a chance, as it were, of showing themselves. The impatient man will have left his hammock half an hour before the tree-creeper alights to make its mouse-like run



## THE OLD PRISON

up the wooden wall of the barn. He will be inside the house answering letters when the greater spotted woodpecker pays its rare and apprehensive visit to the stem of the apple-tree. Happily married goldfinches will return to the accompaniment of a song as delightful as their colours to their nest in the pear-tree, while he is away babbling into the telephone. He will be out buying a magazine while the swallows are teaching their young, hesitant as bathers on a cold day taking their first plunge, to fly. It was as an inmate of the Old Prison that for the first time in my life I overcame this townsman's fatal restlessness and was content to sit and watch the day passing. I cannot overcome it in Hampstead. Even if I had no work to do, there would be something else to distract me. I sometimes wish I were back in the Old Prison.

Even work becomes pleasant in a garden. And by work I do not mean selling things or buying things or scribbling on paper, but honest, hard work, digging the soil. To have one's own spade in one's hands eating into one's own earth is an occupation for a king. It is wearisome—it is even humiliating for the beginner when he discovers that he has half-ruined the garden by digging up the subsoil and throwing it on the surface—but with what an ardour of hope the new, shining-edged spade is thrust into the ground! The crops are already half-grown in the imagination. For the first time in one's life, one appreciates the beauty of potatoes. There is not a vegetable so mean that the initiate



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

gardener cannot become its enthusiastic partisan. The possessive instinct makes him look forward to the appearance of his own turnips and his own Brussels sprouts as if he were preparing for a banquet of the gods. There could be no greater proof of the appeal of gardening to the imagination than the fact that it has enabled men to look with a fatuous fondness on vegetable marrows. It must have been gardeners with their passion for huge achievements who first popularized that monstrous squelch of insipidity. They feel something akin to the boastful joy of parenthood as they watch the reptile fruit slowly assuming the dimensions of the Fat Boy of Peckham. I have known that unholy joy myself. I should know it again if I went back to the Old Prison House. For who even that loathes vegetable marrows could, if he had a garden, resist the temptation to grow them and see them day by day getting bigger and bigger?

It is true that my family maintained that I did none of the real work in the garden—that I merely walked about with gardening-books while the others were working and read passages out proving that whatever they had just done was wrong. I do not deny that I sought guidance from books and that, as a result of doing so, I was able to point out various errors into which the others fell in the positioning of pea-sticks, the thinning of carrots, and the pinching of broad beans. My activities, however, were physical as well as intellectual. It was not the others, but I, who planted the row of shallots,

## THE OLD PRISON

for instance, so near the lawn that, whenever the west wind blew, it sent a gentle odorous waft lawnwards that made the place uninhabitable for anybody who disliked the smell of onions. The infructuous leek-bed, the rather coslettuces than ran to seed—these, too, were evidences that I had not been a mere book-reading idler. When I look back on my life in the garden of the Old Prison House, indeed, I see myself as one of the world's workers sculptured by Rodin. That, perhaps, is why I think of the house with such reminiscent tenderness, almost forgiving the red-headed cook her masterpiece of cruelty when she flung tablespoonfuls of pepper into the otherwise tasteless soup.



## XV. Dinner



A GENTLEMAN has been writing from an address in Mayfair in defence of that comparatively recent social innovation, the cocktail party or the sherry-party. He claims that it has many points of superiority both to the 'afternoon at home' beginning about 4.30 and to the dinner-party. Writing as one of the older generation, he looks back with particular loathing to the many dinner-parties he has lived through. 'I am of opinion,' he declares, 'that generally speaking, the old-fashioned formal dinner-party was one of the most boring institutions in the world, and I am glad that it is now almost extinct, not only for the sake of one's pocket, but also for one's enjoyment of life. Most of the older generation will remember how often they had longed for it to be 10.45, which was usually the earliest hour at which guests felt they could leave, without giving offence, the house of a host with whom they had dined.'

This is, indeed, a lugubrious return to make for all those lavish banquets that anguished hosts and hostesses provided for their guests in the pre-Georgian era. Pity for hosts might surely have induced the gentleman from Mayfair to keep up the noble pretence with which he once bade farewell at dinner-parties, murmuring as



## DINNER

he left: 'Thank you for one of the most delightful evenings I have enjoyed for years.' For he may be sure that, if the guests were bored, the host was bored too. The host, too, had his eye on the clock, wondering whether it had not stopped or whether it could really be only half-past nine. It was no fun for him to sit suppressing his yawns, while a bored guest bored him towards the edge of the grave by telling him how bored he was during his last visit to the Riviera. The trouble about the pre-Georgian dinner-party of this period was that both the host and the guests were utterly lacking in moral courage. The guests had not the courage to get up and leave for fear of giving offence to the host. The host had not the courage to say, as soon as the pall of boredom had fallen about the end of the first course: 'Look here, I can see this party is going to be a failure. I don't know whose fault it is, yours or mine, but I think you had all better go home. Anyhow, I'm off to the Empire.' Instead of behaving in this honest fashion, host and guest sat on raging inwardly against each other, while every mouthful they swallowed, poisonous with the acid of wrath, became an engine of torture, ruinous to the digestive tract, ruinous to the temper. By the end of the meal every man and woman present was suffering not only from acute indigestion, but from the most dangerous repressions. Never did pseudo-Oedipus more ardently cherish a longing to murder his father than the pre-Georgian host longed to murder his guests



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

or than each of the male guests longed to murder the host, and, more eagerly still, the female neighbours who kept alternately cackling into one of his ears and making his life a misery. This was called good manners in the pre-Georgian era; but can it ever be good manners to wish to murder people who are doing their best to be kind to you? Freud arrived too late to study the complexes that the old-fashioned dinner-party gave rise to. I am sure that if he had flourished in the reign of Queen Victoria he would have discovered that the West End of London was full of neurotics simply because half the nice people who were invited to dinner-parties were secretly praying for a safe opportunity to murder the nice people who had invited them.

I have never myself been able to take this gloomy view of dinner-parties. I shrank from parties in my childhood if they involved dancing; but was always partial, as the Victorians used to say, to any entertainment where there was anything better than usual to eat. There was a time when I looked forward with keen anticipation to a Sunday-school soirée. Conversaziones and social meetings—what visions the words call up of banquets of all the cakes that are known in Paradise! I did not then know the phrase *ad lib*; but in how *ad lib*, a spirit I sat in those illuminated assemblies assimilating into my being creamy snowballs, sugar-topped castles, shortbreads, sponge-cakes, jam-filled crescents, and the other masterpieces of the great confectioners of old. No boredom there.



## DINNER

Is the young calf bored as he pushes his muzzle into the bucket of buttermilk? Is the pig bored at the trough?

In the same way the dinner-table on the occasion of a party had an extraordinary fascination for me. If the party was given in our own house I would spend hours beforehand peeping into cupboards to discover what delicacies were being prepared for it and being chased out of the kitchen and pantry for fear I should lay thieving hands on some precious stuff that was meant for an elder who was probably too old to enjoy it. When the guests had sat down to table, I looked yearningly at every dish as it arrived. I have been told that the inner coating of the stomach of a small child is covered with thousands of little mouths that at the sight of beautiful things to eat open cravingly, like the beaks of young birds in the nest when a parent bird approaches to feed them. I believe this to be true. Many of these mouths then opened pleadingly at sight of salmon and cucumber. All opened wide simultaneously at sight of such a variety, such a foison, of jellies and creams as the world has not seen since. I do not wish it to be thought that I am a glutton; I am on the whole indifferent to food; but on such occasions I certainly ate twice what I needed from the sheer force of imagination. What I craved for was not food but beauty, and I absorbed beauty till I could absorb no more. It is this early association of dinner-parties with what the Greeks called *to kalon*, I think, that has



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

prevented me from ever taking sides with the deipnophobes in later life.

I had all the better chance of enjoying dinner-parties in those days, because I was too young to be expected to talk. I could devote myself single-mindedly to the enjoyment of the food to the accompaniment of the pleasant sea-music of the conversation and laughter of the guests. That, I fancy, is the secret of the perfect enjoyment of a dinner-party. The gentleman from Mayfair, no doubt, belonged to a set in which the guests were expected to talk at table. Worse still, they were expected to talk *tête-à-tête*. Everyone will agree that it must be an awful situation for a man who wishes to concentrate his entire mind and soul and body on the enjoyment of the most glorious lobster he has tasted for years to be interrupted by a woman who wishes to know what he thinks of Mr. Gladstone. At such a moment, a man who loves lobster has no thoughts to spare for Mr. Gladstone. Let Mr. Gladstone march through rapine and plunder to the dismemberment of the Empire: the man who loves lobster is too busy dismembering the lobster to care about that. It was probably in an attempt to suppress the vile distraction of conversation during meals that Englishmen for centuries tried to give themselves the reputation of being strong and silent. Possessing such a reputation, they could sit dumb over their dishes without appearing rude.

At the same time, some kind of noise at the dinner-table is essential. The sound of knives



## DINNER

clicking on plates is not enough. An almost entirely silent dining-room, crowded with guests, is unnerving. It was in order to provide a noisy alternative to conversation at meals that restaurant bands were first instituted. For a time everybody was happy till it was discovered that the noise of a band was even more inimical to the enjoyment of food than the sound of one's neighbour's voice asking some silly question that called for an answer. On the whole, the best solution of the difficulty about providing the right kind of noise at table seems to me to be to suppress *tête-à-tête* conversation and make general conversation compulsory. While the conversation is general, the people who prefer talking to eating—and there are many such—could provide the necessary accompaniment of noise, making themselves happy and making the eaters even happier. Or it might be better still to hire a professional conversationalist for a dinner-party who would talk brilliantly except in the intervals between the courses, leaving the host and the guests to their proper business of eating and drinking.

There are, I admit, people who enjoy eating and talking at the same time; but this may be a comparatively modern corruption of the natural instinct to waste no words over one's food. In any case, however, it seems to me that a talkative dinner-party is better than no party at all, and that to be bored by dinner-parties is the very extreme of misanthropy. I myself am no misanthrope. I seldom leave a dinner-party till my host looks grey and tired.



## XVI. The Sin of Impatience      ♪      ♪

**M**EMBERS of Parliament have been pointing out to the House of Commons for the thousandth time that speed is not the cause of road accidents. There are few things more creditable to human beings than faith, and when faith proves to be impregnable against all the assaults of fact and unhallowed reason we honour it even when we do not share it. There are few faiths of our time that have stood all the tests more magnificently than the belief of certain Members of Parliament in the innocence of speed. The number of deaths and other accidents on the roads mounts up, and the greater the number the stronger grows the conviction that speed had nothing to do with them. The M.P.s admit that there must be a mysterious cause of road accidents somewhere, but, try as they will, they cannot make out what it is. All they are certain of is that speed is not the villain of the piece.

We cannot, I admit, fairly make speed the culprit until we have considered all possible alternatives. It is only reasonable, for example, to ask ourselves whether the multiplicity of road accidents may not be largely due to the existence of children and old people. Every one who has studied child-life knows how children regard fast traffic merely as a means to their amusement.



## THE SIN OF IMPATIENCE

In the old days of horse-traffic they deliberately organized races across the street under the noses of trotting horses. They play on railway tracks when the eyes of their elders are off them. In the absence of the police, they play football in the street till the hooting motorist has all but run them down. They have also an unpleasant habit of suddenly chasing each other from the pavement into the middle of the road, and wrestling with each other, so preoccupied with their enjoyments that they have no eyes for oncoming motor-lorries. The child, in other words, has a habit of impeding the motorist that can be very annoying. The motorist has either to take his foot off the accelerator or hoot ahead and risk knocking the child down. Which is he to do? After all, he is not responsible for the children's folly or for the folly of their parents in allowing them to play in the street. If anybody must suffer, surely it ought not to be he, who is innocent of everything except a desire to make a proper use of his car on a public highway. I fear—in fact, I am sure—that children cannot entirely be acquitted of blame for accidents on the road.

As for old people, everybody knows how the suppleness of the legs diminishes with age, and what an unconscionable time an old woman of eighty takes to cross a London street. I watched an old woman crossing Holborn the other day, and it was almost pathetic to see her helplessness to adapt herself to the conditions of modern traffic. Even when, during a lull in



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

the traffic, she hobbled off to an island in the middle of the street she hobbled so slowly that motor-cars that were scarcely in sight when she began her journey had to slow down to enable her to reach the island in safety. She then stood on the island, nervously waiting for an opening to get across. She made several hesitating attempts to set out, frightening one motorist after another unnecessarily. She was like a relic of a dying world, standing bewildered on the shore of the tumultuous tide of progress. There was room for such as she in centuries of semi-civilized slowness. Is there any room for her to-day? How is it possible for a decelerated old woman and an accelerated new car to share the same London street in safety? And if, in the interests of road safety, one of the two must go, who that believes in progress can doubt which it ought to be? I cannot help thinking that if children and old people were confined to their houses in crowded areas and forbidden to use the streets, the figures for motoring accidents would be substantially diminished.

Even then, however, a number of speed-impeders would remain, and accidents would still happen. The ordinary pedestrian as well as the child and the old person takes extraordinary risks in crossing the road. There are pedestrians who take a perverse delight in holding up motorists and who get into the hedge as slowly as possible when they hear a motor-horn behind them in a narrow country lane.



## THE SIN OF IMPATIENCE

There is a ridiculous tradition in England that the pedestrian has the right of the road; and the pedestrian often acts on the assumption that this includes the right to obstruct motorists in their use of the road. Can motorists be blamed if they, for their part, act on the assumption that the wheels of the motor-car are the wheels of progress, and that it is the slowness of the pedestrian, not the speed of the motorist, that makes the roads dangerous?

It is easy indeed to make out a case for the theory that the majority of accidents are due, not to speed, but to slowness. In nine accidents out of ten it will be found that somebody was too slow to get out of the way in time. If the slower party of the two had had just a little more speed, the other party would have missed him. This is true not only as regards pedestrians but as regards cyclists and slow motorists. What an obstructive nuisance the cyclist can be, every one who has driven a car knows. And, as for the slow motorist, it is a well-known fact that he is even more dangerous than the pedestrian. How selfishly he takes up half the road compelling the faster motorist behind him to pass him in the wrong place and so risk a smash involving two or three cars! I have so often suffered from the selfishness of the slow driver—the road tortoise as he might be called in contrast to the road-hog—that I can sympathize with those who denounce him as the most dangerous of all the users of the road.

From what I have written, it will be clear



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

that I am not one of those who believe that speed is the cause of all road accidents. And yet I cannot help believing that the usual cause is excessive speed at the particular moment of the accident. Almost any speed is safe on an ideal road on which every driver, every cyclist, and every pedestrian does the right thing at the right moment. Unfortunately, such ideal roads do not exist in England. On the actual roads you are always sure to find a small percentage of fools and incompetents, some in motor-cars, some on bicycles, and some on foot. In such circumstances, the good driver is the man who drives at such a pace that he will always be able to pull up in time to avoid an accident caused by a fool. Many drivers set out with the assumption that every other user of the roads will behave perfectly, and make no allowance for the imperfections of human nature. They take for granted that every other driver will give the right signal and that nobody, whether motorist or pedestrian, will cross the road till it is safe to do so. It is not possible to drive safely, however, except on the assumption that a number of other people will make mistakes.

The ultimate sin in driving, however, is not the amiable sin of believing that everybody else will behave with common sense, but the unamiable sin of impatience. Hurry, not speed, is the cause of road accidents. Believing this, I pay very little heed to the arguments of those who object to the imposition of a thirty-mile speed-limit in crowded areas on the ground



## THE SIN OF IMPATIENCE

that most of the accidents occur when cars are travelling at moderate speeds. In the first place, I do not accept their evidence. Evidence about speed is usually given at an inquest, and at inquests dead men tell no tales. Spectators cannot always estimate the speed of a car, and the surviving driver, apart from his natural desire to underestimate the speed at which he was driving at the time of the accident, frequently tells the coroner how fast he thinks he was driving at the actual moment of the accident, not how fast he was driving before he slowed down in an attempt to avoid the accident. I am sure that, if he could speak the truth, he would confess, in nine cases out of ten, that he was hurrying and taking certain risks with his own life and the lives of other people in doing so. A thirty-mile speed-limit in town will at least do something to discourage the impatient motorist from hurrying to excess. It has already done so in Oxford, and the diminution of hurry has resulted in a diminution of accidents.

The impatient man—the man who does not know when it is the right moment to go slow, as well as when it is the right moment to go fast,—has always been a curse to his fellow-men. In war he has led armies to disaster: in revolutions he has destroyed the happiness and the lives of thousands of his fellow-creatures. He feels that he is a man of action only when he is in a hurry, and he does not pause to count the consequences to other people. The modern craze



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

for dictatorship is largely a craze for getting things done in a hurry. To me it seems that, on the contrary, the chief need in modern politics is not to get things done in a hurry but to get things done with all humane speed—which, ultimately, I think gets the best things done faster. Certainly the impatient motorist—an exception, it should be said, among motorists, most of whom drive considerately—with his recklessness of the consequences of his impatience for others, is an unpleasant symbolic figure of the new age of hurry. To him other human beings are simply obstructors of the traffic, not fallible mortals with rights of their own who must be considered and for whom some allowance must be made. If he disappeared from the roads, I am convinced that accidents would be reduced by ninety per cent in a single year. And at the end of the year he himself would have a much better chance of being alive to tell the tale.

## XVII. The Patriot



**B**ETWEEN thirty and forty years ago a little man in pince-nez sat in a little upstairs room in a mean street in Dublin, and, surrounded by a litter of newspapers and correspondence on his desk and on the floor, made plans for the resurrection of his country. He looked as little of a dreamer as an ordinary French politician. He seldom made any display of enthusiasm, and he did not take the display of enthusiasm by other people very seriously. He seemed to regard eloquence as one of the vices of his countrymen, and to think that the country would be greatly benefited if speech-making ceased and demonstrations with bands and banners were abolished. He himself cultivated the reticence of a Parnell. He was one of the most profoundly emotional men in Ireland, but his emotions were kept under iron control. One had only to look at his abnormally developed jaw muscles and his square, powerful shoulders to realize the strength of will that lay behind his habitual quietness.

It required more than ordinary strength of will to set out hopefully on the task which he had undertaken. He possessed neither money nor a popular following; and most people who had heard of his paper—and they were a small minority of his countrymen—were convinced



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

that he would never be anything more than an insignificant doctrinaire with a gift for saying bitter things about England and the Parliamentary Party. His few adherents were called 'rainbow chasers' by some and 'cranks and sore-heads' by others. They included, it is true, a number of city councillors as well as a number of poets; but, for the most part, the country remained perfectly indifferent to them.

Arthur Griffith was not in the ordinary sense of the word an extremist. He believed that the extremist policy of physical force by which the Fenians had hoped to win the freedom of Ireland could result only in defeat and in a reaction which would weaken the Irish power of resistance for another generation. On the other hand, he believed that the policy of sending a delegation to Westminster to ask for reforms and for half-measures was humiliating and was turning Ireland into an English province. The Irish nation, he held, could be saved only by a policy which combined the pugnacity and pride of Fenianism with a constructive national movement which, unlike a physical force movement, could not be crushed at a blow.

He discovered his policy while reading—some say, misreading—Hungarian history. He based it, not on theoretic republicanism, but on a demand for the return of the Constitution of 1782. Or it might be more accurate to say that he proposed to set up an Irish Parliament without England's consent, to establish Irish law courts, to build up national industries, to make



## THE PATRIOT

the schools centres of Irish culture, to make every county and district council what was called an 'outpost of Irish nationhood'. The name of the policy was altered after a time from the 'Hungarian policy' to the 'Sinn Fein policy', and by 'Sinn Fein' Griffith did not mean national selfishness, but national self-confidence and national self-dependence. He held that Ireland need not wait to be a nation until it obtained the consent of the British Parliament, but that every individual Irishman was the Irish nation in little—that it was in his power immediately to begin to rebuild the national life of his country, and by combination with others equally devoted and determined ultimately to regain its liberty.

Now it so happens that, but for that policy, the Irish Free State would not be in existence to-day. Many people seem to think that the Irish Free State was won by physical force assisted by the sympathies of those in England and in other countries who were outraged by the methods of the Black and Tans. The truth is, however, that what brought the last insurrection to a successful issue was that, unlike all other Irish movements of the kind, it was based on, or, at least, allied to, the passive resistance movement of Arthur Griffith. After the release of the 1916 prisoners, it is doubtful whether a new physical force movement could have been organized with any hope of success, if the framework of passive resistance had not been planned and brought into existence—a national Parliament



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

set up in Dublin, national law courts set up and obeyed throughout the country, national police parading the streets within sight of the official police. It was this framework of passive resistance that enabled the Irish national movement to reorganize in the years after the War.

It is all the stranger to remember that a little before the War both Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Brotherhood seemed to most people to be on the point of death. It has been said that at that time all the members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood could have been crowded into a concert-hall and, Griffith's attempt to run a daily paper having failed, his small party seemed to be disappearing for ever. The hope of Home Rule made the mass of Nationalist Irishmen indifferent to all rival policies. If Ulster had not armed it is possible that the ordinary Englishman to-day would never have known that such a policy as 'Sinn Fein' existed.

It was of Griffith the man, however, not of his policy, that I thought when I read that last Sunday a procession of his fellow-countrymen was forbidden to lay flowers on his tomb. History, I believe, will regard him as the greatest constructive mind—or, at least, the most effective constructive mind—that was ever devoted to Irish politics. His mind was in one sense narrow: he was capable of bitter injustice to political opponents. At the same time, he had a large-minded conception of nationality and wished to create an Irish civilization that



## THE PATRIOT

would be as acceptable ultimately to the old Unionists as to the Nationalists. Politically, he preached hatred of England, but he looked forward to peace with England as the ideal. 'I want peace with England,' he declared in one of his speeches, 'but first let England take her one hand off Ireland's throat and her other hand out of Ireland's pocket.' He automatically in the meantime took sides against England in international politics. His paper was suppressed during the war as a seditious organ. He immediately brought out another paper, *Scissors and Paste*, consisting exclusively of passages from the English Press which had already been passed by the censor. He made these innocent passages look so seditious that *Scissors and Paste* was also suppressed.

He took no part in the rising of 1916, and, it is believed, was not in favour of it. He was arrested all the same, however, and kept in solitude in Wandsworth Jail apart from the other prisoners as a specially dangerous revolutionary. He was the most cheerful of prisoners and made no attempt to prove his innocence. When he was offered his liberty on condition that he would sign a paper promising to abstain from revolutionary activity, he asked to be allowed to read it and then quietly tore it in pieces and threw it on the ground as his answer.

When he was allowed to mingle with his fellow-prisoners in another jail, his calm cheerfulness did much to make prison life bearable



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

to them. He was most cheerful when there was least obvious reason to be cheerful. He was equally imperturbable in Dublin in later years when men in his position lived in constant danger. High-strung, like all great journalists, he was, nevertheless, incapable either of panic or of despair, and the worse Dublin Castle behaved, the more confident he became of the approaching freedom of Ireland. When the Treaty came he was realist enough to see that here was a measure of freedom which, apart from the secession of the Six Counties, in effect repealed not only the Union but the Conquest. His fight for the Treaty and the strain of seeing a civil war raging over what seemed to him to be an empty phrase, just at the moment of triumph, killed him. Like John Mitchel, he 'cared not twopence' for republicanism in the abstract; he cared only for the freedom of his country. One can scarcely think of him, indeed, without thinking of Mitchel—Mitchel of whom he once wrote: 'When the Irish Nation needs explanation or apology for John Mitchel the Irish Nation will need its shroud.' History, I imagine, will speak in the same terms of Arthur Griffith.

## XVIII. The Record

ON looking through a modern dictionary the other day, I found that the editors refused to acknowledge that the word 'record' can bear the meaning attributed to it in such phrases as 'record time' and 'record first-wicket stand'. I believe it is true that for many years *The Times* never printed the word in this sense without carefully enclosing it in inverted commas, as though it were a vulgar intruder into the preserve of classical English. The very fact, however, that even people who never used the word without inverted commas were frequently compelled to use it showed that it was badly needed in the language. It was a useful abbreviation of a long phrase as 'cab' was a useful abbreviation of a long word; and it was hall-marked as good English by the fact that everybody, from the cricket-loving bishop to the small punter on Epsom Downs, uttered it excitedly when a new record in a favourite sport was established.

The present age simply could not have got on without the word. Owing to the invention of speed-making devices unknown before the end of the nineteenth century, and to their continuous improvement, scarcely a month passes without a record's being broken and a new record's being made. A motorist flies like a



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

bullet along Daytona Beach at a speed unapproached since the creation of the world. A few months later, another motorist follows him and travels still faster; and, even if he is faster only by a few seconds, the whole world applauds him. The aeroplane alone has, since its invention, set up hundreds of records—the first flight across the Channel, the first flight across the Atlantic, the first east-to-west flight across the Atlantic, the first solo flight across the Atlantic, the first flight to Australia, the fastest flight to Australia, the longest flight, the highest flight, the fastest flight in the race for the Schneider Cup, and scores of others. The balloonists again have begun to make records that bring the planets nearer, and the speed-boats, no doubt, are setting up records that will lead to the invention of speed-liners which will whisk us from Europe to America between two sunsets. Even in the world of the old-fashioned steamship and railway train the passion for record-making has been strong. Nation has done its best to wrest from nation what has been called the 'blue ribbon of the Atlantic'. A railway company feels that it has done something worthy of an ode by Pindar when it enables one to travel from Swindon to London faster than any one has ever made the journey before. And every time a new record is made, a thrill of triumph is communicated from the newspapers to the blood of millions of readers. 'Festina lente' is the motto of an all but dead philosophy. We insist upon our



## THE RECORD

festination's becoming faster and faster. Why? Nobody knows.

There is always, of course, the excitement of the race. The great sport of modern times is the race of the present to beat the past—even the immediate past. We may not be able to produce wiser men than Socrates, but we can travel from London to Brighton at a pace of which Socrates was incapable. We may have no poets to compare with Shakespeare, but we can get to Paris many times as quickly as he. The past had its own genius, but we have ours. In this rivalry between the past and the present I find my sympathies divided. For me the past is peopled with majestic beings, legendary figures, and I am not sure that I should like to see them reduced to life size, and made competitors with men whom you might see at a table in the Savoy grill. There is a certain pleasure, for example, in thinking of Samson as a strong man on a scale unknown in the world to-day. How the poetry would vanish from his story if one were told that some strong man appearing in a West End music-hall had been proved to be stronger than Samson! We demand demigods, and, except for children, it is much easier to believe in demigods who belong to the past. Take actors, for example. No living actor can ever be the equal of Garrick or Edmund Kean in our imaginations. A great actor might appear to-morrow, but Garrick and Kean exercise a spell on us, not only as great actors but as legends. They are a part, not merely of history, but of



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

fiction. Sarah Bernhardt, Ellen Terry, Coquelin, Henry Irving, they, too, will be promoted in time into fiction: the process, indeed, is already happening. They were great, being alive; they will be greater, being remembered as myths of the past. Living in the real world, we must have an ideal world, and we must set it either in the past or in the future. As we know nothing about the future, most of us find it easier to set it in the past.

Some people may think that this worship of the past is a debilitating sentiment and that it is proof of a lack of self-confidence in the present. There is no evidence, however, that things have ever worked out in this way. Ancestor worship has, as a rule, been a spur to descendants to emulate famous deeds. Cromwell's men did not lose their capacity for action because they looked on Moses and Joshua as heroes of a stature unattainable by themselves. The example of Plutarch's men has done more to inspire than to depress those who have studied Plutarch most piously during struggles for freedom. One is more likely to be incited to virtue by believing that the Knights of the Round Table were more than common men than by believing that they were men of a physique and character that could not have stood the pace and rough-and-tumble of a twentieth-century Rugby-football match. It is a strange fact that to disparage the past in comparison with the present is usually the mark of greater cynicism than to disparage the present in comparison



## THE RECORD

with the past. Hector's contemporaries had every right to criticize him; now that he is a figure of the past, however, ennobled by Homer into a myth, who without a twist in his imagination could belittle him?

During the present summer we have been witnessing a competition between the present and the past on the English turf. The present has been impersonated by Gordon Richards, the jockey: the past by the shade of Fred Archer. Until this year no English jockey had ever ridden so many winning mounts in a season as Fred Archer. This year it became obvious that Richards was going to beat Fred Archer's record, and a whole nation (millions of whom have never seen a horse-race) found itself excitedly following Richard's score, feeling that the world of to-day was about to triumph over the world of yesterday. Richards became our representative, our champion, in the race with the past. We desired his victory all the more because everybody who knew him praised not only his genius, but his sportsmanship, his modesty, and his industry. He had never, perhaps, impressed his personality on the general public as Steve Donoghue did some years ago; but as a record-breaker he was seen to be one of the greatest jockeys of all time. Nobody but a curmudgeon could have hoped that he would fail in proving his supreme genius by results. Yet I confess, pleasant though it is to see the triumph of contemporary genius, I cannot help feeling sorry for the shade of Fred



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

Archer—sorry, too, that the world has been robbed of yet another legend.

At the same time, it is no bad thing for the present age to have a few living legends to set beside the legends of the past. A few living legends we have, but they are mostly in spheres, such as aeronautics, in which the past does not compete as a rival. Previous generations have usually had their living legends in statesmanship, literature, and sport. The Victorian age had its living legends in Palmerston and Gladstone, Dickens and Tennyson and W. G. Grace. To-day, even the most enthusiastic boy cannot feel for any living statesman the reverence that even hard-hearted old men once felt for Gladstone. There are fine writers on earth, but none who, in legendary power, commands the world as did Dickens and Tennyson. In cricket, it is true, Hobbs is something of a legend, but not quite on the scale of W. G. Grace. Perhaps, with the triumph of Gordon Richards, the tide will turn. We may be on the eve of initiation into a new age of legendary figures with a little chap on horseback leading the procession. To-morrow a novelist may beat Dickens's record, and a statesman Gladstone's. We may yet see a greater actor than Irving and a greater comedian than Dan Leno. Do not therefore look on Richards's victory as a trifle. It may be the first peep of a world-illuminating dawn.



## XIX. Marriage      ♪      ♪      ♪      ♪

‘CONVENTIONAL people,’ says Mr. Bertrand Russell, ‘like to pretend that difficulties in regard to marriage are a new thing.’ I could not help wondering, as I read this sentence, where one can meet these conventional people. I have known hundreds of conventional people, and I cannot remember one of them who thought the things conventional people are said to think. They were all, for example, convinced not only that marriage was a state beset with difficulties, but that these difficulties were as old, if not as the hills, at least as the day on which Adam lost a rib and gained a wife. The conventional people of the Victorian era were certainly under no illusions on the subject. Their cynical attitude to marriage may be judged from the enthusiastic reception they gave to *Punch’s* advice to those about to marry—‘Don’t’.

I doubt, indeed, whether the difficulties of marriage were ever depicted more cruelly than during the conventional nineteenth century. The comic papers and music-halls made the miseries of marriage a standing dish. ‘You can always tell whether a man’s married or single from the way’s he dressed,’ said the comedian. ‘Look at the single man: no buttons on his shirt. Look at the married man: no shirt!’ The



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

humour was crude; but it went home to the honest Victorian heart. If marriage were to be judged by the songs conventional people used to sing about it in the music-halls, it would seem a hell largely populated by twins and leech-like mothers-in-law. The rare experiences of Darby and Joan were, it is true, occasionally hymned, reducing strong men smelling strongly of alcohol to reverent silence; but, on the whole, the audience felt more normal when a comedian came out with an anti-marital refrain such as:

O why did I leave my little back room  
In Bloomsbury,  
Where I could live on a pound a week  
In luxury?  
Single life was bad, I vow,  
But, since I have married Maria,  
I've jumped out of the frying-pan  
Into the blooming fire.

No difficulties? Why, the very nigger-minstrels of my boyhood used to open their performance with a chorus which began:

Married! Married! O pity those who're married.  
Those who go and take a wife must be very green.

It is possible that the comedians exaggerated, and that Victorian wives were not all viragos with pokers, who beat their tipsy husbands for staying out too late. But at least they and their audiences refrained from painting marriage as an inevitable Paradise. Even the clergy would go no farther than to say that marriages were *made* in Heaven. That it was not a matter of faith to believe that marriages necessarily



## MARRIAGE

ended there is shown by the fact that one of them wrote a 'best-seller' bearing the title *How to be Happy Though Married*.

I doubt, indeed, whether common opinion in any age has ever looked on marriage as an untroubled Paradise. I consulted a dictionary of quotations on the subject and discovered that few of the opinions quoted were rose-coloured. These opinions, it may be objected, are the opinions of unconventional people, but it is also true that they are opinions treasured and kept alive by conventional people. We have the reputed saying of the henpecked Socrates, for example, when asked whether it was better to marry or not: 'Whichever you do, you will repent.' We have Montaigne writing: 'It happens as one sees in cages. The birds outside despair of ever getting in; those inside are equally desirous of getting out.' Bacon is no more propitious with his caustic quotation: 'He was reputed one of the wise men that made answer to the question when a man should marry: "A young man not yet; an elder man not at all."' Burton is far from encouraging: 'One was never married, and that's his hell; another is, and that's his plague.' Pepys scribbled in his diary: 'Strange to see what delight we married people have to see these poor folk decoyed into our condition.'

The pious Jeremy Taylor was as keenly aware that marriage is not all bliss. 'Marriage,' he declared, 'hath in it less of beauty and more of safety than the single life—it hath more care but less danger; it is more merry and more sad;



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

it is fuller of sorrows and fuller of joys.' The sentimental and optimistic Steele can do no better than: 'The marriage state, with and without the affection suitable to it, is the completest image of Heaven and Hell we are capable of receiving in this life.'

Rousseau denied that a perfect marriage had ever been known. 'I have often thought,' he wrote, 'that if only one could prolong the joy of love in marriage we should have paradise on earth. That is a thing which has never been seen hitherto.' Dr. Johnson is not quoted in this dictionary; but every one will remember how, devoted husband though he was, he denied that the state of marriage was natural to man. 'Sir,' he declared, 'it is so far from being natural for a man and woman to live in a state of marriage that we find all the motives which they have for remaining in that connexion and the restraints which civilized society imposes to prevent separation are hardly sufficient to keep them together.' When we come to the Victorian Age we find the greatest writer of the period putting into the mouth of Tony Weller a sentence packed with pessimism about marriage: 'Ven you're a married man, Samivel,' says Tony, 'you'll understand a good many things as you don't understand now; but vether it is worth while goin' through so much to learn so little, as the charity boy said ven he got to the end of the alphabet, is a matter of taste.' And did not a later Victorian, Robert Louis Stevenson, much derided nowadays for the 'obviousness'



## MARRIAGE

of his thought, warn the world from the heights of his young bachelorhood that 'marriage is a field of battle and not a bed of roses'?

When one reads the things that have been said about marriage from one generation to another, one cannot but be amazed at the courage with which the young go on marrying. Almost everybody, conventional and unconventional, seems to have painted the difficulties of marriage in the darkest colours. So pessimistic were the conventional novelists of the nineteenth century about marriage that they seldom dared to prolong their stories beyond the wedding bells. Married people in plays and novels are seldom enviable, and, as time goes on, they seem to get more and more miserable. It is only fair to say, however, that in modern times we like to imagine that nearly everybody, single as well as married, is miserable. As social reformers we are all for happiness, but as thinkers and aesthetes we are on the side of misery.

The truth is that we are a difficulty-conscious generation. Whether or not we make life even more difficult than it would otherwise be by constantly talking about our difficulties I do not know. I sometimes suspect that half our difficulties are imaginary and that if we kept quiet about them they would disappear. Is it quite certain that the ostrich by burying his head in the sand never escapes his pursuers? I look forward to the day when a great naturalist will discover that it is to this practice that the ostrich owes his survival.



## XX. Verity's Test Match

WHEN the second Test Match came to an end at Lord's on Monday, amid a happy delirium of excitement, it was difficult to believe that the game had ever seemed dull—at times even deadly dull. It was difficult to believe that on Friday morning half the spectators had been talking contemptuously of the English batting, that on Saturday afternoon half the spectators had been talking contemptuously of the English bowling, and that through part of the game the majority of the spectators had been talking contemptuously of the English fielding. For somehow, to the surprise of everybody, the game had turned out to be as sensationally exhilarating as even the most sensation-loving spectator could desire, and the despised English batsmen, bowlers, and fielders had managed to beat the Australians by an innings and 38 runs. No doubt, the weather had something to do with it. Contrary to what one would expect, there is nothing like rain for making Test cricket worth watching. Still Verity, with his record of 15 wickets for 104 runs, played at least as brilliantly as the weather. He made such tricky use of the tricky English climate as only a bowler of genius could do. As a result, he walked straight into history—not, perhaps, Thucydidean history, but Wisden history—on Monday.



## VERITY'S TEST MATCH

When the game began on Friday, everything was perfect but the cricket. The sun was shining, the June-green trees were tossing in the wind, the field with its thirteen white players and its lime-white-coated umpires was lovely as only Lord's can be, every spectator was happy at being present on so great an occasion, and the wicket, everybody said, was ideal. It was evident from the start, however, that we were in for some of the tedium of a war of attrition. This would not have mattered if Sutcliffe had not played as if he were either hypnotized by Australian prestige or blinded by the sun. He, the indomitable, the man of iron nerve, played with such caution that again and again he did not seem to know what he was trying to do. As Mr. Robertson-Glasgow said of him, he stood at the wicket and 'scraped about like an anxious bird'. He infected the spectators with his anxiety, and the only astonishing thing was that he remained at the wicket for nearly two hours for his 20 runs.

Walters, in the meantime, in his green county cap, was grace itself at the other end. After a slow beginning, when he played the ball as if he were not on a cricket-pitch, but on a putting-green, he let himself go like a master at the bowling. Grimmett, who bowls so slowly that he does not even trouble to take off his cap and leave it with the umpire during his overs, set traps for him such as had tempted him to destruction at Nottingham. Wall bowled ball after ball at his wicket after the longest run-up



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

ever taken by a bowler. Big Bill O'Reilly, lanky and with thinning fair hair on his crown, had a turn at him. McCabe, who looks rather like Low when he takes his cap off, wasted his energies in over after over. But Walters, without ever becoming contemptuous, was always at his ease, and kept the wickedly keen Australian fielders busy racing for the ball. For a time it looked as though he were the only hope of preventing an English rout. Sutcliffe was out l.b.w. after an innings in which almost the only incident was the ball's losing itself in his pad above the knee. 'W.G. once ran eleven when that happened,' said a spectator behind me. Hammond came after him and sent a schoolgirl catch to Chipperfield, the bowler, when he had scored 2. Hendren, who had superstitiously refused to take advantage of the democratic revolution at Lord's, which permitted the professionals and amateurs to use the same dressing-room, was given a reception that showed that he was the most popular man on the field, but it was to an accompaniment of sad hand-clapping that he walked back to the Pavilion when he had made only 13. England had now lost 3 wickets for 99 runs on a wicket said to be perfect.

Wyatt, whose thumb-guard was twice sent flying into the air, kept his end up steadily till Walters was caught, having made 82 runs, and the score stood at 130 for 4 wickets—a disastrous-looking situation with Walters gone.

It was Wyatt, Leyland, and Ames who pulled



## VERITY'S TEST MATCH

the game together during the rest of the afternoon. The crowd gradually lost its sense of impending defeat, as Leyland and Ames began to run dangerous singles, and Leyland's left-handedness kept the fielders on the run. There was a shout of joy when Leyland swept a no-ball right among the spectators for 6. But it was a day of few striking incidents, few conspicuous personalities. At the end of the day, when England had scored 293 for 5 wickets, the crowd had a rather dull sense of an impending draw.

The second day's play was, in parts, a little soporific. I do not know why anybody pays to be present at a Test Match if he wants to sleep, but it should be put on record that on Saturday both on the grass and in the stands several spectators were to be seen sleeping. To be sure, those who remained awake had the pleasure of seeing centuries completed by Leyland and Ames, and the appearance of the figure 100 in the score-board has always a curiously elevating effect on the spirits. At the same time, the English batting was not quite so exciting as the Australian fielding. It must have been pretty sound, however, to knock up a score of 440 against such fielding. To the expert—if not to the inexperienced—eye, it was even beautiful.

It was later in the afternoon, however, that the cricket achieved a beauty that could not have been missed even by a spectator who understood neither the technique nor the rules



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

of the game. While Bradman batted, a livelier emerald twinkled in the grass for every man, woman, and child present. He put into his play all the high spirits of cricket. He is a player who can often be seen talking laughingly to the wicket-keeper between one ball and the next, and there was a boyish glee in the way in which he whipped and flicked the ball into every corner of the field as he wished. It is always good to see a boundary hit smashingly. To see three boundaries in succession hit smashingly as Bradman hit three boundaries off Verity on Saturday is like draughts of bubbling wine to the spectator. There is nobody else living who can intoxicate a crowd on the cricket-field like this. How beautiful is incaution when it is linked with masterly skill! But how dangerous! I confess that, though I hoped England would win, my heart sank when Bradman was caught and bowled by Verity at 36, and the flashing bat was to flash no more for the day.

Then came the wet week-end, turning the pitch into a Slough of Despond for the Australians. So soaked was it that on one occasion Hendren, when stepping across it, pulled up the legs of his trousers like a Victorian lady holding up her skirts to cross a puddled street. In vain did the Australian batsmen pat it and remove this thing and that from its surface. Verity, meditative as an economist at Geneva, cunning as Ulysses, had exactly the pitch that his left hand of the many wiles needed, and he bowled all day long as if to men who had been



## VERITY'S TEST MATCH

stupefied by drugs. Aesthetically, he is one of the most delightful of bowlers. As an inexperienced, I am all in favour of fast bowling, but there is such grace in Verity's movement as he runs slowly up to the wicket and sends the ball spinning to its goal that one could watch him for ever—at least, if it had always been raining during the previous week-end. By the end of the Australian first innings, when eight wickets had fallen for only 92 runs more than the Saturday score of 192, he had taken six of the eight. And how exciting it had become when Australia needed only a few runs to save the follow-on! One watched every ball in the hope or fear of catastrophe. This was dramatic cricket at its best. No wonder the spectators went wild with joy when Wall was given out l.b.w. and the players trooped back into the Pavilion.

As for the second Australian innings, it was played by men who seemed to realize that they might as well have stayed playing cards in the Pavilion. Woodfull, slow as Learoyd, stood his ground nobly for a time—a great cricketer, though one gets tired after a time of looking at the Rock of Gibraltar. No one else but Chipperfield looked as if he knew what to do with Verity's bowling. Occasionally, a batsman would hit out at it, like an exasperated man striking at a wasp with a tennis-racquet; and, when he did so, sure as fate the ball would go on wings into a fielder's hands. Bradman took a careful look at it for a time, and then decided



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

that he was the equal and indeed the superior of the English climate. He sent one ball high as a shrilling swift into the air and almost scored a boundary. That convinced him that the spirit of don't-give-a-damn could beat even Verity. He struck out nobly again, mistimed his stroke, and the ball shot high above his head and was lost for a time in the ether. The only danger of its being missed when it came back was that so many English fielders were waiting for it that they might collide and knock each other over. Wisely, all but Ames stepped aside, and Bradman was gone to a shout of joy that must have reached Australia. It was now all over. The spectators became uproarious as one wicket fell after another and dejected batsmen made their way through the slough back to the Pavilion. Australia was undoubtedly on the run. The team, possibly, is at least as good as the English team, but it had been routed by Verity plus the English climate. On such an occasion, who wants the better team to win? No one but an imaginary sportsman. There were very few of these angelic characters present at Lord's on Monday.



## XXI. The Most Popular of the Vices

THE most popular of the vices at the present moment seems to me to be intolerance. It is, at least, the vice that in the last few years has been most conspicuously increasing in popularity. In other words, the world is becoming normal again. It was thought for a time that the War would make a difference—that human nature, having been taught so severe a lesson, could never sink back to the level on which it had been content to exist from the time of Moses to that of Prince von Bülow—that we should henceforth be a band of brothers, gentle to each other's faults, eager to help each other in the great task of building up a peaceful and delightful society worthy of the sun that shone upon it. Circumstances, however, conspired for the defeat of this charming dream. Peace brought to many millions of people not a glimpse of a brave new world on the horizon but poverty, loss of liberty, loss of dignity, and numerous other causes of disappointment. Men ceased to fight only in order to wrangle, and, as they wrangled, they drifted towards despair. It was a time that called for a strong man, and, whatever can be said in favour of a moderate man as a statesman, his damning demerit is that he seldom looks strong. A strong man was all the more urgently needed in large areas



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

of Europe, because it was necessary to combat not only decay, but the policy of another strong man who was carrying on a crusade against Western society in Russia. Now a strong man cannot look strong unless he is intolerant; and looks count for as much in statesmen as in musical-comedy actresses. Hence what millions of men and women craved for was a strong-looking man who would cry to them: 'The fire of faith is dying. Take up the bellows of intolerance and blow it to a flame again.' Many of them are now obediently blowing the bellows and enjoying it because everybody has a childish love of blowing bellows.

It is not difficult to understand the appeal of intolerance to those who have never read history. Intolerance at first sight seems like a magic sword which will swiftly cleave a way through the forces of evil. If one had never read the history of the religious wars there would be good reasons for believing that a single generation of applied intolerance was all that was required in order to establish the perpetual triumph of the true, the beautiful, and the good. Intolerance is also exceedingly attractive, because it makes the blood course more joyously through the veins and increases the activity of the imagination. The intolerant man is still living in the world of fairy-tales in which the hero lives for the destruction of ogres. He may call the chief ogre Catholicism or Protestantism or Capitalism or Communism



## THE MOST POPULAR OF THE VICES

or even Feebleness in High Places. By whatever name he calls it, he believes that it is a danger to everything he holds dear, and he tells himself that it is an object well worth dying for to rid the world of this pestilence. This conviction is known as faith, and it is attractive even from an aesthetic point of view because it brings a light into men's eyes and a light into their faces as well as into their hearts. Where we get faith without intolerance we get the most beautiful thing in the world. But even an intolerant faith—perhaps, one ought to say, especially an intolerant faith—exercises a spell on the imagination of mankind. It is a release from Laodiceanism, a proof that life is worth living for something more than eating and sleeping, a communion with the fire in our fellow-men's souls.

Clearly then, if it were not for its evils, intolerance would have much to be said for it. Hitlerism, Fascism and Stalinism—what ardours they represent, what subordinations of the self, what simplifications of the ancient war between light and darkness! If one could forget their victims, how magnificently large their conceptions would seem compared with the petty aims of garrulous old men in democratic States! Under these iron dictatorships men at least know where they are going. They may not get there; but is it not better to know where one is going and not to get there than not to know where one is going, like a democracy, even if one gets there all the same? It is



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

certainly more heroic, and, above all, it looks more heroic, and I doubt whether a time will ever come when organized heroism will lose its appeal to the imagination.

The greatest obstacle to the triumph of tolerance is the fact that it is the least heroic-looking of the virtues. Reflect for a moment on its dubious origin. 'It was,' says Buckle, 'in an age of dissoluteness that toleration grew up. The dissoluteness passed away; the toleration remains. The Regency which, as Mr. Macaulay has observed, presents a strong analogy to the court of our Charles II, seems to have given rise to toleration.' If toleration is merely a natural child of dissoluteness, how can we expect young and ardent spirits to devote their lives to its service in presence of the rival attractions of intolerance, the lovely and legitimate child of faith? Even Coleridge admitted that toleration was of the same family as lukewarmness. He declared that 'toleration then first becomes practicable when indifference has deprived it of all merit.' It is little wonder that toleration seems to many people a kind of spiritual weak tea. It is but one aspect of good nature, and it is commonly agreed that good nature is merely another name for self-indulgence. Hazlitt, who was himself not a very good-natured man, once pointed out how extremely undesirable good nature was in public affairs. 'Good nature,' he declared, 'or what is often considered as such, is the most selfish of all the virtues; it is nine times out of ten mere indolence of



## THE MOST POPULAR OF THE VICES

disposition. . . . Good nature is a hypocrite; it tries to pass off its own love of ease and indifference to everything else for a particular softness and mildness of disposition. . . . If the truth were known, the most disagreeable people are the most amiable. . . . They are general righters of wrongs and redressers of grievances. . . . A good-natured person is no more to be trusted in public affairs than a coward or a woman to lead an army. Spleen is the soul of patriotism and of public good. Lord Castle-reagh is a good-natured man, Lord Eldon is a good-natured man, Charles Fox was a good-natured man. The last instance is the most decisive. The definition of a true patriot is "a good hater".'

It must be confessed that there is a good deal of truth in this indictment. One certainly feels more good-natured during a luxurious dinner than when one is seriously and unselfishly thinking about the condition of almost any country in Europe between Russia and Ireland. Food and wine produce in us an extraordinary capacity to bear the wrongs of other people with at least temporary equanimity. At the same time, I feel that a complete history of good nature would provide a few examples of good-natured men whose thoughts were occasionally diverted from their stomachs to the public good. Socrates was a good-natured man, and history has placed him on a higher pedestal than the ill-natured men who compassed his death. Mr. Shaw, again, is a good-natured



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

man, and though, perhaps, he devotes too much thought to what food is to be set on his table he can scarcely be accused of lack of public spirit. The history of the struggle for toleration, indeed, is something more than a monotonous chronicle of the self-indulgences of voluptuaries and gourmets. Voltaire was not exactly a saint, but he objected quite altruistically to the torture of his fellow-human beings for a slight difference of opinion about religion or politics. He lived in a world in which intolerance was still the mother of innumerable cruelties, and, though not a particularly good-natured man, he loathed these cruelties as heartily as if he had been a lazy glutton. He was no more tolerant with his pen than an inquisitor, but he did not believe in using the sanctions of intolerance—the stake, the rack, the dungeon—in order to combat what he regarded as evil. His was the true tolerance of a man who believed that it was possible to fight opinions without punishing people for holding those opinions. Perhaps if those Englishmen who defend Hitlerism had lived like Voltaire in an age of intolerance, had found themselves unable to express an opinion without fear of punishment, and had never been able to converse without the possibility that a spy in the company might send a report of their conversation to the authorities they would have realized that liberty of opinion is an even lovelier thing than beating up people who disagree with one's opinion. There must be something better in life than spies and bad temper. We shall,



## THE MOST POPULAR OF THE VICES

perhaps, discover that freedom is better when we cease to possess it. And then decent men will give their lives for its recovery. And when they have recovered it they will think nothing of it. And so on in a circle.



## XXII. The Case for Noise

SENSITIVE people have been writing to *The Times* to protest against the freedom enjoyed, even in these days of vanishing liberties, by street musicians. Why, they ask, should one section of the community be allowed to earn a living by hindering another section of the community from earning a living? Surely, however, if one set of workers is to be suppressed in order that another set may be able to work in peace, we ought to begin by suppressing more serious offenders than street musicians. Grant the principle that one set of workers must not be allowed to interfere with another by making a noise, and we shall find ourselves having to abolish almost the entire transport system. Motor-lorries, motor-buses, motor-cars, motor-bicycles, are all, from the point of view of the hater of noises, pestilential. The sound of horns, of changing gears, of squealing brakes, of rattling loads, is a music hideous in comparison with that produced by the worst cornet-player. It is a music, too, that has not the excuse that it is intended, like the cornet-player's, to give us pleasure. There is as little pleasure, again, to be had from listening to a tram crossing the points as from listening to a heavy object falling downstairs. As for trains that shunt and bump all night at railway-junctions,



## THE CASE FOR NOISE

with mighty engines hooting at each other, it is not a noise that soothes the lover of silence at his late desk.

The builder, again, is a terrific disturber of other workers. If noise is to be done away with, building must be done away with. Whistler, I believe, did once go out to some builders who were at work near his house in Chelsea and peremptorily order them to stop building as it interfered with his painting. The builders, however, did not understand the logic of his position, and merely regarded him as an eccentric. Yet one does not need to be an eccentric in order to be exasperated by the day-long din of trowels and the fiendish uproar of pneumatic drills. Nor can the clergy themselves pursue their vocation without persistently invading their neighbours' peace. Centuries ago, some innocent idealist invented a church-bell, and there has been a plague of church-bells in the world ever since. It would not matter so much if they were good bells—though even the best bells can disturb a scholar's meditations—but thousands of them are extremely bad bells. Many men have been driven into the arms of rationalism through living too close to a peal of bells. The telephone system is another thing that will have to be abolished if we insist upon having silence for our work. Of all noises the sound of the telephone-bell is the one that I detest most. It always seems to come as a rude interruption. Not even its association with invitations to charming parties has made it



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

tolerable. Why, then, do I keep a telephone in the house? It must, I think, be because everybody else has a telephone in the house.

Now, do the haters of noise seriously propose to abolish the transport system, the telephone system, the church, and the building trade on the ground that all these things produce noises that are irritating to men engaged in intellectual work? If they do not, how can they reasonably call for the suppression of street bawlers and bellowers and players of instruments?

May it not be, indeed, that their entire attitude to noise is both unreasonable and unnatural? There is no evidence, so far as I know, that the human being is born with a hatred of noise. Even the most intellectual baby in the cradle smiles at the sound of a rattle and, before long, it is triumphantly beating a spoon on the table, drowning the conversation of its elders.

The boy as he grows up will beat an empty bucket as a recreation. He will joyously draw a stick across railings. He will extract music from a comb. He will make deafening noises for the love of making them. He will whirl a buzzer. He will blow a penny trumpet with only one note. He will hasten wherever there is noise to be heard. In my own childhood every boy under the age of ten would have run a mile to hear a German band. The monotonous noises of machinery delighted us. We could stand for hours looking at and listening to reaping-machines and threshing-machines. If a merry-go-round with a mechanical organ was in



## THE CASE FOR NOISE

the neighbourhood it was impossible to stay away from it. We haunted railway stations with their noisy engines. We loved the sound of cranes at work unloading ships in harbours. Navvies breaking up a road with picks, gardeners sharpening scythes on hones, dogs barking, people quarrelling with raised voices in the streets, carpenters hammering, blacksmiths beating horseshoes into shape on anvils, cockle-sellers inarticulately shouting their wares, newsboys yelling, cocks crowing, toy-pistols cracking, and fireworks exploding—I am sure I enjoyed almost every sound in nature and in civilization except thunder. And I might even have enjoyed thunder if my nurse had not told me that it was God speaking in anger at our sins and that, moreover, the lightning was dangerous.

It is as though the natural boy realized that where there is noise there is life. After all he comes into life with a cry, and, if he does not make a noise at an early stage, his parents are unhappy. Loudly as many of us protest against noise we know in our hearts that the really terrifying thing is silence. It is because most of us are in such terror of silence that we talk so much. We may have nothing to say, but we rummage our sterile brains for words that will at least keep the noise going. I know a lady who when she is introduced to people at a party, merely stares at them in silence till the words fade from their stammering lips and they look round in agony, feeling unable either to stay where they are or to go away. There is nothing more



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

uncomfortable than to find oneself in the company of a man who never says a word but occasionally whistles under his breath. If he whistled out loud, one would not complain, but that absent-minded kind of half-whistling only intensifies the silence. Close friends may enjoy each other's company in silence, but silent strangers are appalling. Much conversation being what it is, however, I sometimes wonder whether it would not be better if we carried about whistles and drums and other instruments of the kind, and, when in company, made a noise with these instead of with our vocal cords. A derisive tootle on a flute would be a more effective answer than I can give to many of the arguments I hear, and the banging of a drum would enable even the worst mumblor to express himself audibly.

The haters of noise will have to explain away this hatred of silence if they are to succeed in their campaign. They must also be prepared to face and refute the charge that they are playing false to human nature in their active detestation of street-music. They say that noise disturbs them, but is that their fault or the fault of the noise? Have they the right to let it disturb them? There is a thrush singing in my garden without even the excuse that he is doing it for a living. If I adopted the attitude of those who hate noise I should probably become irritated and go out and throw stones at him. As it is, if I want to work, I can cease to hear him; and I think that, if we are put to it, we



## THE CASE FOR NOISE

can shut out a good many noises from our consciousness provided that we do not tell ourselves that they are hateful. If a poet began to think of noises of the countryside as hateful, he would not be able to work in the country. As it is he works quite peacefully amid an orgy of noises, which, if they were produced by itinerant musicians in the streets of a city, would make—or seem to make—intellectual labour impossible. Imagine what London would be like if itinerant musicians went about giving perfect imitations of mooing cows, neighing horses, baaing sheep, gagging geese, gobbling turkey-cocks, quacking ducks, crowing cocks, drumming wood-peckers, hooting owls, and singing nightingales. Should we not all declare the noise intolerable and call for its suppression? Yet the country is full of such sounds, and the poet loves them as the slum child loves the sound of a barrel-organ.

There is obviously a case to be made out for the street-musicians. I have felt all the freer to try to state it since I live in a street that is very little infested with them. As a result, I can afford to be reasonable. I am a man, however, who changes his opinions easily, and if my poor friend with the travelling harmonium in the main street should one day vary his round and establish himself outside my doorstep, I might fall a victim to prejudice. Street-musicians should play in other people's streets. That is the condition on which I should permit the exercise of their art.



### XXIII. The Guide



LORD HEREFORD, speaking at the annual dinner of the Horatian Society, is reported to have said that, 'if the younger generation only studied the works of Horace, they would know better how to act in troublous times'. It is an agreeable thought, for the works of Horace are not hard to procure. Many of us, looking backward, however, can recall how doggedly we studied Horace when we belonged to the younger generation, and how, nevertheless, when we came to belong to the older generation, we found ourselves as much bewildered in presence of troublous times as our contemporaries who had concentrated on mathematics.

The truth is, Horace was himself something of a perplexed philosopher. He had not that one-way mind which is so necessary in a practical teacher. What nearly all of us who want a leader are looking for is a man whose mind permits only a one-way traffic of ideas. The ordinary German youth would have far more confidence in Hitler than in Horace as a guide through troublous times. The belief in the one-way mind has always been conspicuous both in religion and in politics. It makes for decisiveness, and the ordinary man, being a prey to secret indecision, demands decisiveness in his leader at all costs. To say this is not to belittle the one-way mind which



## THE GUIDE

possibly does the world as good service as the freer two-way mind. But it makes it unlikely that Horace will ever be accepted as a guide through troublous times, except by a small minority.

I think I have read somewhere a comparison between Horace and Burns, and certainly they are alike in this that, instead of teaching any consistent philosophy, they direct the reader to one point of the compass after another as the spirit moves them. Burns incites you at one moment to make a happy fireside clime for weans and wife: a moment later, he is tempting you to give the weans and wife the slip and join him in a tipsy sing-song with the jolly beggars. He is for the most rigid morality to-day, and is loud in derision of the rigid moralists the day after. He is as much at home in the pulpit as in the public-house, and guides you from one atmosphere to the other, not according to any settled philosophy, but according to the mood of the moment. I am not suggesting that there is any fundamental hostility between the pulpit and the public-house; but most men in search of a guide through the troubles of life would feel a little bewildered if the leader to whom they had entrusted themselves marched through the midnight streets singing the Hundredth Psalm followed immediately by a lusty rendering of 'What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor?'

I think it was Sir Walter Raleigh who pointed out that Burns owes his position as a national poet largely to the fact that he was responsive to almost every mood of which a Scotsman—



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

one might almost say a human being—is capable. Burns included in himself all the seven days of the week from the Sabbath morn till Saturday night at closing time—and after. As a result, he is the bard alike of the pious paterfamilias and of the village wastrel—of the lover whose love will endure till the rocks melt in the sun and of the bawdy Don Juan of the countryside.

It would be absurd to press too far the parallel between Horace and Burns; but there is considerable resemblance between them in the great variety of contradictory moods to which they are responsive. They are both on some occasions intensely ethical: on others, they are more concerned with pleasure than with the good life. This is, of course, a common enough alternation in poets: there is a conspicuous dissimilarity between the philosophy of the secular verses and that of the religious verses of some of the seventeenth-century poets. At the same time, Horace and Burns went beyond most poets in their enthusiasm for both aspects of the double life. In this, I think, they were extremely faithful as recorders of human nature, which swings between gravity and levity with the motion of a crazy pendulum. The Stoicism and Epicureanism of Horace were equally sincere, but you cannot quite trust as a guide a man of whom you feel you never know quite whether he is going to take you to a bottle-party or to a meeting of the Ethical Society. What we like in Horace, perhaps, is that he never quite knows himself. He is easygoing at one moment,



## THE GUIDE

resolute the next. Self-indulgence and self-denial tempt him perpetually with their rival charms.

I confess that, when I was forced to read him, I liked him best in his sterner moods. Never having been submitted to hardship, I was stirred by the ideal of hardship and hard fare for the young. I had a profound admiration for Regulus, and had a notion of imitating him if ever an opportunity arose. It pleased me to imagine myself living on beans on a farm, and scorning death, and all that sort of thing. Not that I was entirely indifferent to those wine-cups with which his philosophy was so cheerfully punctuated. But I felt that it was more within my grasp, and therefore a less glorious aspiration, to be a pig from the sty of Epicurus than to be the indomitable Stoic of the Regulus ode. At the same time, the philosophy of Horace was so oddly mixed and self-contradictory that I never looked on him as a fount of pure wisdom. And the fount of pure wisdom is one of the great quests—however intermittent—of youth.

We have, in the first flush of youth, a magnificent belief that this fount of wisdom is to be discovered in books. Even to take down certain books from the shelf seems like touching wisdom with one's hands, and to read them is to absorb wisdom into one's being through the eyes. I do not know whether anybody in his teens reads Emerson to-day, but there was a time when it made ardent youths feel they were already on the way to leading heroic lives even to read the first page of his essay on self-



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

reliance. Here was a call, the command of a demi-god, to be one's true self, and one was conscious of an enormous longing to be one's true self, whatever that might be. One felt about eight feet high as one read. One was in the mood to go out and challenge princes and potentates and anybody else who tried to set up a barrier of custom, convention or what was called common sense between oneself and the achievement of that godlike nobility which was the purpose of one's being. I doubt if I could now explain Emerson's philosophy, but what a leader he seemed! There were no compromises in him. One never suspected that, just as one was beginning to feel noble, he would let one down, as Horace let one down, and set one enjoying life again like an ordinary human being. Rather, he spread before one an unfailing banquet of spiritual dishes with no materialistic cookery to spice them. 'Jove nodding to Jove'—that, if I remember right, was how he described what happens when you and I are talking together. I never could recover this sense of celestial grandeur when I was actually talking to my friends, but, while I read the book, I walked on ether.

Thoreau, too, greatly attracted me by his self-dependent, self-denying ways. If you have never denied yourself anything, the ideal of self-denial is extremely alluring. You see yourself in your mind's eye practising a life of self-discipline, and you cut a much more admirable figure there than in the mirror. What troubles you, however, is the enormous gulf that seems to be fixed



## THE GUIDE

between the figure in the mirror and the figure in the mind's eye. I thought at one time of making a jump of it, but I was no athlete, and I refrained.

How far the books of the wise men are guides through life it is difficult to measure. It is obvious that the sacred books of the great religions have moulded the lives of men and women for centuries, but the ordinary human being finds it no easy task to follow the guidance even of a sacred book with much consistency. As for the secular authors, many men, I am sure, would ascribe some turning-point in their lives to the reading of a book, but not very many. I do not mean to say that all our bookish aspiration after virtue is wasted, but how few of us there are who constantly turn to any author as a guide through troublous times! Emerson and Carlyle once seemed to many people to be such authors. To-day, I doubt if anybody, in presence of the threatening rumblings of the civilized world, reinforces himself with the wisdom of either of these teachers who in their own time were great. Yet how the faith in books survives! How at the back of one's mind one still half-believes that somewhere on one's shelves is the testament of the perfect philosopher, in reading which wisdom will become as irresistible to the soul as a magnet to a needle. 'The man who is upright and tenacious of purpose'—Horace certainly tells us about him, but he does not tell us how to become like him. Or, if he does, he has never made the explanation clear and compulsive to me.



## XXIV. Pinching      ♪      ♪      ♪      ♪

A NIGHTINGALE was singing from across the road on Monday morning while I was shaving. It is not a time of day at which I am in the mood to appreciate the song of the nightingale, and I went into no ecstasies over it. At the same time, it made the country seem even more idyllic than before—a place of innocent sounds and sights among which a man might live through the spring in innocent enjoyment.

When I went downstairs, I fell into talk with a woman who had for a time kept a small hotel or tea-shop in just such a place as this. I gathered from her that the beauties of Nature do not induce the spirit of innocency in all who visit these English Edens. A man apparently may walk all day along paths by the side of which peacock butterflies spread their wings in the sun on the snow of the blackthorn, and may yet remain no more innocent than the Artful Dodger. Even among country ramblers there is a percentage of thieves. She told me that she began by trying to make her tea-shop as pretty as possible. She hung little treasures not very valuable, but reminiscent of her travels abroad—on the walls, and some of these were quickly plucked down and carried off by her customers. She bought a dozen pairs of



## PINCHING

silver sugar-tongs and a dozen silver tea-strainers: at the end of six months there was only one of each left. She bought half a dozen copper ash-trays: five were stolen during the same period. Nor was thieving the only vice of her customers. They—or a proportion of them—were also possessed by the love of destruction. One evening, she had a party of young gentlemen who called for tea and bacon and eggs: she left the room to fulfil the order, and, when she came back, she found that they had brought in all the flower-pots they could lay hands on in the garden and made an imitation garden in the tea-room, leaving her precious new carpet in an earthy mess.

Sir Thomas Beecham has just been calling the first-night audience at Covent Garden barbarians and savages, because a few—a very few—members of it talked during the overture to *Fidelio*, and, at one moment, applauded in the wrong place. One can understand his annoyance, but it led him into exaggeration. Epithets such as he used should be reserved for offences more heinous than talk during music and inopportune hand-clapping. If you indict the human race too vehemently over little things, the danger is that you will have no phrases left to describe worse forms of misbehaviour. And it seems to me an infinitely worse form of misbehaviour to rob a poor tea-shop keeper than to talk during the overture to an opera. In practice the talk infuriates me more than the theft, but, when I have recovered my philosophy,



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

I can see that stealing is the more reprehensible.

It may be argued that this stealing is largely innocent—that it is a mere branch of the sport of trophy-hunting. And I have known many amiable youths who were addicted to this sport. They felt the day wasted if, after a visit to a hotel at the end of a football match, they returned home without at least a stolen spoon. Nothing in the hotel was safe from their mania for trophies, unless it was too big to carry away. The clock and the pictures and the flower-pots would have gone if they could have been fitted into pockets. There were youths, too, who when travelling in trains felt unhappy unless they cut off the window-straps and carried them off as trophies. Others went about in the shades of evening wrenching the knockers off doors. I knew a youth who had a collection of these which, if he still possesses them, he should send to the British Museum as an exhibit of some characteristic details of Victorian architecture. I was never a knocker-wrencher myself, my wrist-work not being sufficiently good and my fear of the police being excessive. I could not help sympathizing with the exalted spirits of the ardent knocker-wrencher, however, and marvelling at his feats. There was one knocker, I remember—it was in the porch of an empty house in which my friends and I used to meet to talk in the evening—which had defied the efforts of the greatest knocker-wrenchers in the town, and I looked at it with a certain



## PINCHING

melancholy, thinking of all the brave men who had done their best with it and had failed to loosen it. It had a twisted, tortured air after its many struggles with the local Rochesters, and one felt that it would be doing it a service to put it out of its pain. It was a good knocker and deserved a place in a good collection of knockers.

It is difficult to decide the point at which trophy hunting merges into stealing. Man is not naturally honest: he has a greedy eye for the possessions of other people; and, if he refrains from stealing them, it is in obedience not to his nature so much as to his training. The orchard-robbing boy is conscious of no guilt: it is only as he grows older that he learns to respect the taboo against appropriating what belongs to others. Yet how guilty he seems if it is one's own orchard that he robs, especially if there is only a little fruit in it and one has been watching it ripen with tender, greedy eyes! I remember once having a plum stolen from my garden. It was the only plum on the wall and it was the most beautiful plum I had ever seen. Every morning every member of the household would go out for a look at it. The unspoken question of each was who was going to eat it when it finally became ripe. A little town-girl, who was spending a holiday in the house next door, settled that. One day she was seen disappearing hurriedly over the garden gate, and, after her disappearance, it was found that the nonpareil of plums was gone. What a monster of iniquity she seemed! One would not have



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

mind her taking anything else in the garden, but there was a kind of malignant wickedness in eating one's only plum. I am sure, however, that she herself did not realize her guilt. The criminal, when young and unrepressed, has an easy conscience.

It is possible that the desire to steal survives in most of us during life, and reveals itself even in maturity when given an opportunity. Kleptomania is apparently common. There is scarcely a day passes without some perfectly respectable woman appearing in the dock as a result of having been unable to resist slipping some trifle into her handbag while strolling round a big shop. The ordinary human being, trained in obedience to a very strict code, is conscious of no such temptation. One could trust most of one's friends to walk through all the stores in London without pinching so much as a fountain-pen. The ordinary human being, indeed, is so habitually honest that, if he found a purse of gold in the street, he would inform the police about it. Who can tell, however, what price he is paying for the repression of the Autolycus side of his nature? Some honest men have a melancholy look; if they were psycho-analysed, it is possible that it would be discovered that they were suffering from suppressed dishonesty. Their natural self needs some release. How can this be contrived?

I sometimes think it would be a good thing to open a number of shops stored with cheap goods where a man would pay a small admission



## PINCHING

fee and be allowed to steal anything he could on condition that he did so without being caught. If he were caught, he would not only have to return the stolen goods but pay double their value. I remember how successful a stall at the Wembley Exhibition was where one paid sixpence and was allowed to destroy as much crockery as one could with two or three hard balls. Decent citizens who had never deliberately smashed so much as an egg-cup since their childhood glowed with unholy joy as they sent a water-jug crashing to its ruin with a well-aimed ball. The smashing of a vase brought a strange gleam into their eyes, and even the man whose ball hurtled straight into the bull's-eye of a dinner-plate had the air of a king acclaimed by his people. It was quite obvious that all these ball-throwers were feeling an immeasurable happiness as a result of the release of their destructive instincts. They were enjoying a new and glorious freedom. Man is instinctively a destroyer as well as a creator, and we do not give him enough harmless opportunities for expressing his desire to destroy. As a consequence, we frequently find him giving expression to the destructive side of his nature in such dangerous spheres as politics, literature, and conversation. Would it not be better to have a booth of crockery at every street corner, and allow everybody to obtain relief for his destructive instincts for sixpence? In the same way, the institution of special shops for stealing would turn pinching into a sport and satisfy



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

all those dishonest instincts which now express themselves at the expense of the keepers of tea-shops.

After all, this kind of theft is seldom due to need. Members of the upper and middle classes are more likely to steal the hotel sugar-tongs than any pauper. Much of the pleasure of doing so is probably the pleasure of successful cunning. To bring home a trophy—it is a debased form of the warrior's joy. Even among pinchers, however, there must be a minority in whom stealing becomes a perverted passion. They will steal the soap from hotel lavatories rather than steal nothing; and the remains of a cake of soap can scarcely be dignified by the name of a trophy.

It is certainly an odd comment on the march of civilization that pinching remains so common a habit. Human beings are, it seems to me, a kinder and a better-mannered race than ever before, but apparently they still go on pinching. They have more amusements: they love the country more numerously, if not more deeply, than their fathers: they will travel miles in search of birds and flowers; but still they go on pinching. They have to a large extent ceased robbing birds' nests, but they go on robbing landladies. It is a savage amusement—perhaps one should say an amusement worthier of a jackdaw than of a human being; and I wish Sir Thomas Beecham could stop it as easily as he stopped the talking during the opera.



## XXV. The Draw



ONCE more the great prize has eluded me. Once more the draw for the Irish Sweep has taken place and the result has been as before. Nearly two million pounds has been allotted to all kinds of deserving and undeserving people, but not a groat to me. Which of us are the more enviable, I wonder, the winners or the losers? I have often read letters in the Press on the demoralizing effects of sweepstakes, and I have tried to come to a decision as to whether it is more demoralizing to win £30,000 or to lose ten shillings. All I am sure of is that it is not very demoralizing to lose ten shillings. Life goes on as usual. The sky has not fallen. It may be that it is better to have loved money and lost it than never to have loved money at all.

As the sweepstake has recently been under discussion in Parliament, with the blood of the peerage boiling at the iniquity of gambling in any part of the British Commonwealth except England or Tasmania, I was glad to take advantage of an opportunity to go over to Dublin and see the draw which was causing so much distress among the dukes. As one approached the Irish shore, the whole island was bathed in the innocence of sunshine. It was as lovely as an island seen in the West in a dream. When I arrived in the city and went out for a



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

walk round Stephen's Green, birds were singing above children at play, and the world was in flower in the still evening. Could it be that a serpent was lurking somewhere in this green and gold paradise? Was that young father, as he pushed his infant son along past the ducks in a go-cart, dreaming the poisonous dreams of avarice? I cannot say. I saw only the surface of things, and no serpent was visible to the naked eye.

The next day was the Sabbath, and through the gentle Sabbath sunshine I went out to Croke Park to see a hurling match between Dublin and Limerick. How charming the teams looked in the brilliant green of Limerick and the brilliant blue of Dublin! A pipers' band came out, dressed in green kilts and with flowing saffron robes, many of the pipers wearing feathers in their caps. They marched round the field, followed by the teams, the players walking two by two, as in the march on to the Ark, a green-shirted man beside a blue-shirted man, each carrying a hurley, the weapon used in the game. As the procession marched round the field over the green grass to the accompaniment of ancient, warlike airs, one could not help regretting that no Irish painter had ever arisen to perpetuate on canvas the colours of the hurling field as Degas perpetuated the colours of the race-course and the ballet. Beside the leader of the band marched a midget boy in the pride of green kilt and saffron, stretching his legs into impossible strides in order to keep in step with heroes.



## THE DRAW

How vast and determined was his stride as the pipers burst out into *The Bold Fenian Men*! Then the pipers ceased and the police band played *The Soldiers' Song*, and the game began.

I do not know the rules of hurling, but, as a moral equivalent to war, it seems to me to be about the only rival to Rugby football. It is said to be the original form of hockey: some people have described it as hockey without rules. It is rather like a mixture of hockey and lacrosse. Hurleys, as the clubs are called, rise into the air like weapons of war, and the player is allowed to do almost anything he likes with his hurley except deliberately hit a player on the other side. The unaccustomed spectator cannot but feel apprehensive as he sees the players wielding their weapons among the skulls and limbs of their opponents, lest some mortal injury may result. Hurleys meet in the air with a wild crashing of wood: one of them is broken into two pieces, and small boys rush on to the field in a struggle to retrieve a broken blade as a memento. The rate of stick-smashing was so rapid that I was reminded of a game I once played as a boy when we smashed the entire set of a respectable householder's croquet mallets in a game resembling hurling on a lawn. The casualties to sticks certainly went into double figures. The casualties to players were less numerous, but the ambulance men must have been on the field seven or eight times, and I could not help feeling glad that there were no international hurling matches. Imagine a game



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

of hurling played between France and Scotland. Yet, after all, only one of the injured players had to leave the field. Possibly even hurling is not so dangerous as it looks.

It is certainly a swift and beautiful game, calling into play all the skill of eye and hand and foot. To see a good player catching the ball in his hand amid a mob of stick-whirling opponents and striking it through the air half-way up the field into the goal-mouth is an experience worth crossing the Irish Sea to enjoy. On the whole, the Limerick men seemed to be about a quarter of a second faster than the Dublin men in everything they did, and it looked at half-time as if they were certain to run through them. There was a Dublin back, however, who played like a demi-god, and who was always a quarter of a second faster than any Limerick man who was near him. Even when a game is one-sided, an invincible player can keep it exciting to the end. Knowing nothing about the game, I do not know whether it was a good match or not; but it was a good match for me. As I left the ground a friend who was with me said: 'After this, I don't think you need feel nervous about going to a bull-fight.'

One curious thing about the spectacle of physical prowess such as this is that it makes one forget all about money. While I was watching the game, and for a considerable time afterwards, the ten shillings that I had invested in the sweepstake was less than the dust beneath your taxi wheels.



## THE DRAW

Even the next morning, when I set out to see the draw in the Plaza, I felt curiously indifferent to the fate of the ten shillings. I had always felt a little nervous of being present at the draw. What would happen, I asked myself, if I heard my pseudonym announced as having drawn the favourite? I have never swooned in public, but should I not swoon if I suddenly found myself named in presence of the multitude as the potential possessor of £30,000? A poor man could do a lot with £30,000. He could vegetate for the rest of his life, and who except the saints does not long to be able to afford to vegetate? There is much to be said, after one has passed middle age, for the life of a vegetable.

I confess, however, when I arrived at the Plaza, I ceased to care whether I won £30,000 or not. The atmosphere was too unreal, too like an enchanted Elstree. Fierce lights blazed down upon us from all parts of the hall, turning us into film supers. The monstrous blue-and-white drum on the stage that held all our counter-foils was painted in the image of a river flowing under a bridge on which stood a sweep with his broom and various national characters. Round the walls were pictures by Mr. Keating, retelling the great treasure stories of the world, from *Ali Baba* to *Treasure Island*. Above the stage was the inscription, 'The World's Greatest Treasure Story—the Irish Sweep.' A band in the gallery played Irish airs, and hundreds of girls in every kind of treasure-story costume filled the central aisle and ranged themselves like a



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

chorus across the stage. The Lord Mayor in his robes, Colonel Broy (the head of the police) and Lord Powerscourt marched through the cinema scene to the platform. Hospital nurses took their places beside the drum. A very small glass drum was brought out, containing the names of the horses. Auditors, linguists, messenger boys, telegraphists, men in medieval costumes, helped to crowd the scene. We had speeches telling us how the sweep had helped Irish employment, English trade and the hospitals; and how it had sent £11,000,000 to England in prize-money; and then the drum began to revolve with a noise.

Six nurses, their arms bare beyond the elbow, sitting sideways to it, rose from their chairs as it stopped. Six portholes were opened in the side of the drum. Each nurse put her hand into a porthole, drew out a counterfoil and held it high above her head, as though announcing to the world that in this business there was no chance of conjuring tricks. Colonel Broy stepped across the stage and took the counterfoils from the hands of the six nurses and then delivered them to the clerk's table. The little glass drum was revolved, and out of this a nurse took out the name of a horse. Mr. O'Sheehan, the secretary and announcer, read the name of the horse and of the pseudonyms on the six counterfoils that had been drawn—'About Time', 'Luck at Last', 'White Cat', and so forth; and when an Irish address was announced, a crowded hall cheered loudly. There must also have



## THE DRAW

been some Somersetshire people present, for there was an unexpected ovation when the name and address of a Somersetshire man were read out.

So all day long the noise of drawing rolled, with the floor of the building shaking under the feet of the innumerable messenger-boys who hurried with typed lists of the winners to the Press and the telegraphists. One became hypnotized as the stream of luck flowed on under the heat of the lamps. But the audience never tired. The plot of the play they were witnessing was not particularly coherent, but it was a transformation scene for a great number of eager human beings. It was a dazzling costume-play of hope, admirably staged. If there is anything much more innocent than this in this far from innocent world, I do not know it. But then, I was brought up in an age which looked on it as a virtue not as a vice to live in obedience to the precept: 'If you don't at first succeed, try, try, try again.'



## XXVI. Bath-water



IF we may judge from the correspondence columns in the Press, one of the most absorbing topics in Great Britain at the moment, is the use of bath-water in the garden during a drought. Hitherto most of us have scarcely given a thought to bath-water. It was water spoiled for common use through its defilement with soap and the soilure of our bodies. As children, we maintained a keen enough interest in it till the last pint of it had disappeared with a terrifying gurgle down the waste pipe; but that was because our nurses, in order to compel us to come out and be dried, had invented a legend that we, too, might be swept down the pipe, where a beast of the family of the Loch Ness monster lay in wait for us. Shades of the prison-house began to close about us, however, and the golden light of credulity was no longer able to penetrate our darkness. Romance gave place to that form of blindness which is called realism. Bath-water, when once used, became to us mere dull and dirty liquid. It was not even saleable, like old rags and old paper. It was the most worthless and most uninteresting thing in the world.

It required the prolonged drought to convince most of us that it is a mistake to adopt an attitude of contempt, even to bath-water. Men



## BATH-WATER

and women of all classes have suddenly become alive to the fact that, in the absence of rain, bath-water is a precious thing that should no more be thrown away rashly than the juices of the vine. It is, some of them even declare, more beneficial than rain itself would be to the roses and violas in the garden. That admixture of soap, which we once believed ended its uses, appears to give it new qualities of enrichment and to provide it with alkalis that are among the luxuries beloved by the flowers. The very offscourings of our bodies, it may be, are a sweet dish to a pansy. Who can tell? All living things except man have queer tastes. Does not the cow eat grass and the donkey thistles?

Man, however, is a lazy animal. Realizing that the flowers in his garden are craving for this once-despised bath-water, he is still perplexed as to which is the easiest way to transfer the dirty water from the bath-room to the garden. To scoop it up in a bowl and to pour it into a watering-can and then to walk up and down stairs again and again with the watering-can till he has filled larger outdoor receptacles with the contents of the bath is tedious work even for a man who has nothing else to do. If he is addicted to a cold bath, he may, of course, pour each canful, when he takes it down, straight on to the flower bed, but in blazing sunshine that may do little good to the flowers. Whether the water is hot or cold, he will probably find it best to store the precious stuff up till the approach of sunset, when every flower,



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

gasping like a fish on dry land, will be able to appreciate his showers of blessing before falling into its evening slumbers.

Readers of *The Times* have been suggesting a variety of labour-saving devices for getting the bath-water into the garden. One reader recommends 'syphoning' the water from the bath-room to the outer world. Another reader says that he knows a better method. He has 'attached an old inner-tyre tube (cut) to the end of the waste-pipe, near the drain; and then, by means of either old treacle-tins or tinned-fruit tins, with their bottoms cut out, has put on as many more inner-tubes as necessary. The tins,' he explains, 'make a perfectly water-tight joint, as the soft rubber tyres can be stretched well over them. The resultant "hose" is moved to a different place each night, and the bath-water does the rest.' How ingenious human beings become when cast away on a desert island or left in similarly challenging circumstances! How Nature comes to their aid, too, with a supply of inner-tubes and old treacle-tins, as in *The Swiss Family Robinson*! I, unfortunately, should have to do an injury to my motor-car in order to procure an inner-tube, and I should not know where to lay my hands on an old treacle-tin if my life depended on it. I do not even know whether we use tinned fruit in the house, and in these hard times it would seem scarcely decent to try to borrow an old tinned-fruit tin from a neighbour. Besides, even if I had an old treacle-tin or an old tinned-fruit



## BATH-WATER

tin with the bottom cut out, and an inner-tube, and all the rest of it, I should be perfectly incapable of putting them together in such a way as to devise the elaborate pipe by means of which *The Times* correspondent waters his garden. I should feel exactly as I should feel if some one gave me all the parts of a motor-car or a wireless set with instructions how to put them together. Tasks such as these are for mechanical giants. If my flowers depended on my engineering capacity, they would indubitably die of thirst.

At the same time, this correspondent's letter confirmed me in my belief in the worth of worthless things. Not only has he found old bath-water useful: he has found even old inner-tubes and old treacle-tins useful. Who will ever again be able to throw anything away with a good conscience? I once knew a man who, when he had lit his pipe with a match, always put the dead match into his waistcoat pocket. He realized that, by relighting it at a gas-bracket, he could use it again. That man seems now to have been a pioneer. He saw that there was nothing, however worthless it seemed, that was really worthless. Yet how many things we throw away carelessly every day—empty cigarette packets, empty bottles, old corks, old newspapers! I myself am something of a miser as regards useless things, and can scarcely bear to throw away even an old postcard. I hate to see the medicine cupboard cleared of its old half-finished bottles. When I get a new shaving-brush,



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

I am still faithful enough to the old one to wish to preserve it for a rainy day. If the house were full of old treacle-tins, I should, I am sure, be reluctant to see them committed to the indignity of the dust-cart. It now looks as though this hatred of throwing things out may have a basis in common sense. Yet hitherto I have been credited with nothing better than indolence.

I had no sooner grown complacent as regards my appreciation of worthless things, however, than Lady Maud Warrender published a letter declaring that all these tubes and tyres are entirely unnecessary for the purpose of getting bath-water into the garden. 'Why,' she asked, 'worry about tyre tubes and treacle-tins, when you can place a tank on the ground outside and fill it with a tin can from the bath-room window? Having shot tigers and targets,' she added, 'I find it easy to make a good hit at the tank for the benefit of my thirsty garden.' This seems to me to be turning the needs of the flowers into an occasion for sport. Moreover, in the course of her tiger-shooting, Lady Maud must sometimes have missed the mark. What if she misses the tank with one of her canfuls of bath-water? May not a peony suffer in consequence? What is fun to her may be death to the lupins. I cannot say I like the introduction of the element of blood-sport into the provision of those innocent creatures, the flowers, with their meed of bath-water. Little drops of bath-water should not be used as the ammunition of a big-game



## BATH-WATER

hunter when the forget-me-nots have such need of them. Better the tedium of the treacle-tins than such heartless play.

The question arises, however, whether the citizen has the right to use the bath-water in his garden during a water-shortage. Recently, a villa-dweller, believing that an Englishman's bath-water was his own to do as he liked with, carried the soapy water out of his bath to the flowers in his garden, and, being observed by one in authority, was asked whether he had a licence for the outdoor use of water. He admitted that he had not, was prosecuted, and fined. He was punished, I suppose, on the theory that anybody could carry any amount of tap-water from the bathroom into his garden and pretend that it was only bath-water. The water authorities take no risks, feeling justly that no man who loves flowers is to be trusted. If the use of the garden-hose is to be forbidden even to those who have taken out a licence, however, can we be sure that the licence-holders will play the game with their watering-cans if still permitted to use their bath-water? Will some of them not be tempted to fill the bath extravagantly full in order to have enough water for their flower-beds? Will others of them, deprived of the hose, not brazenly fill their watering-cans at the bathroom tap, with a story ready for the inspector, if he calls, that they were merely using water they had already bathed in? I have a high opinion of human nature, but I do not trust gardeners. It will be a pretty



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

problem, if the drought continues, how far the State can take the risk of allowing the citizen to make what use he pleases of his own bath-water. Meanwhile, mine goes to enrich the grateful earth. How pleasant it is to feel that one is of some use in the world after all!



## XXVII. Our Ancestors ~ ~ ~

MEN have usually felt a strong desire to be worthy of their ancestors. 'And I, can I be base?' cried Robert Louis Stevenson as he recalled the noble lighthouse-builders from whom he was sprung. That, or something like it, was quite a common attitude of mind until fairly recently. There has during the present century, however, been a slump in the reputations of ancestors. To many critical moderns their immediate ancestors seem to have been a crowd of elderly gentlemen suffering from blood-lust who showed an unpleasant readiness to give their sons to England. Looking back a generation farther, they discover an ancestry that was little better than a swarm of prigs and hypocrites in top-hats. All Victorian ancestors are suspect, indeed. Did they not seize the greatest wealth-producing inventions ever known for selfish uses? Was not their gospel a blasphemous mixture of the New Testament and 'Devil take the hindmost'? Nor when we go back beyond the Industrial Revolution do the ancestors greatly improve. Their most notable characteristics, it seems, were corruption at home and piracy abroad.

A little earlier, ancestors were sanctimonious land-stealers who ended by hating each other and killing each other for the love of God.



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

Their favourite toys were the rack and the thumbscrew. We certainly can see no reason why we should honour or imitate them. One school of historians assures us that, if we go back far enough, we shall find an admirable set of ancestors in the Middle Ages. One would like to believe this, but another school of historians, equally learned, declares that the Middle Ages were a time of cruelty, dirt and ignorance that even a Hollywood film-producer would shrink from putting on the screen. This school's view of the Middle Ages may be gathered from the way in which they say of the inhabitants of a particularly insanitary slum that they are living in 'medieval conditions', and describe people who are ignorant to the point of imbecility as steeped in 'medieval ignorance, superstition', etc.

Where, then, can we find a body of ancestors worthy of the respect of so wise a generation as ourselves? The reign of Hadrian in the second century after Christ is commonly described as a 'golden age', and many people think they would like to have lived in the age of Pericles, though a large number of those who did so would gladly have changed places with them if they had been offered the chance. As for the world of the early Greeks, it was no more agreeable than the world of our immediate ancestors. The annals of the other ancient races are even blacker. Who, reading the Old Testament, feels a longing to have lived in any period described in it, except during the brief sojourn of our first



## OUR ANCESTORS

parents in the Garden of Eden? When one thinks of the bloodthirstiness of some of those ancient Hebrews, one cannot help rejoicing in the fact that bombs and poison gas had not yet been discovered: otherwise the human race would have been exterminated far sooner than it is going to be. Burke or Mr. Gladstone once said that you cannot indict a whole people: if you study the deeds of your ancestors, however, you will find that you can quite easily draw up an indictment of the entire human race.

This is a gloomy reflection, and one would be in danger of sinking into pessimism if it were not for the fact that an eminent anthropologist, Professor Elliot Smith, has at last produced a long-lost ancestor whom it is possible to put on a pedestal and bow before with genuine respect. This admirable ancestor bears some resemblance to the noble savage idealized by the humanitarians of the eighteenth century. He is none other than primitive man. It is pleasant to see science coming to the aid of mythology in this fashion, for mythology has been saying for centuries that primitive man was a good fellow, and it was only after the triumph of science that we began to believe that he was an advanced kind of baboon with various bad qualities added during the advance. The poets told of a Golden Age when everybody was happy and unselfish and lived on the fat of the land, and some of them even suggested that this blissful state of things might have gone on for ever if the discovery of gold had not corrupted the hearts of



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

men with the new passion of acquisitiveness. The men of science did not like this pleasant theory, because it conflicted with the dogmas of evolution. According to the evolutionists, the descent of man has been an ascent. But, if one idealizes primitive man as the old poets did, human history must appear as a long story of retrogression. Hence, many anthropologists eagerly informed us that man began his career, not in idyllic glory, but in degradation.

I have not seen a full report of Professor Elliot Smith's lecture, and do not know how far he is prepared to restore the Golden Age to its rightful place in human history, but it is clear, at least, that he sees primitive man as a being endowed with many of the virtues after which we still struggle in vain. 'Primitive man,' he declares, 'was ethical, exemplary, peaceful, honest, truthful, and well-disposed towards his fellow-men; but the growth of civilization put an end to all this Arcadian perfection.' That, certainly, reads like a confession of faith in the Golden Age. In what subsequent era can we find ancestors of whom so many good things can be said? Has man as a type at any other time since then been 'ethical, exemplary, peaceful, honest, truthful, and well-disposed towards his fellow-men'? Many men in many generations have had these qualities; man, I think, never.

It would be interesting to know how this honest fellow came to be corrupted. The explanation used to be that he was tempted by a serpent who told his wife that she was suffering



## OUR ANCESTORS

from repressions and would be happier if she could get rid of her apple complex. This explanation, however, has been discredited in recent years, and the Devil is out of favour as a scapegoat. There must, at the same time, be some explanation of how this early Washington gradually became capable of doing all the disgraceful things of which we read in the annals of our race. I fancy the fall must have taken place long before civilization began. It seems to me likely that primitive woman one day found her two primitive sons hammering each other's eyes and noses, and that, when she had dragged them apart, and asked them, 'What is it all about?' one of them answered, 'He pushed me,' and the other retorted angrily, 'He pushed me first.' The second answer was a lie, invented on the spur of the moment. What the boy ought to have said was, 'I did push him, but the push was accidental.' Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell the truth in the heat of a quarrel; more unfortunately still, primitive woman believed the son who had told the lie and showed special favour to him. This convinced him that there was something to be said for lying. It was pleasanter than he could have foreseen, a daring exercise of the imagination, and it produced excellent results. The injustice of the thing, unhappily, filled the other boy with anger. He meditated revenge and his heart was aflame with envy. He began to suspect that his brother was being given the best portions at dinner. He decided that as he could not achieve justice by



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

peaceful means he had better knock his brother's brains out with a stone. In some such way the Golden Age may have been brought to a sudden end, with the entrance of the First Liar and the First Murderer.

I find it difficult to believe that some such thing could not have happened, unless we assume that man was originally born with an incapacity for anger. It seems more probable that the seeds of evil as well as the seeds of good were there from the first. The Preacher said: 'God made man upright, but lo! he hath sought out many inventions.' I wonder, however, whether man was made more upright in the dawn of the world than he is to-day. If he was, I am sure it did not take him long to begin to seek out the inventions.

In painting primitive man as a well-disposed and peace-loving human being, it must be admitted, Professor Elliot Smith has a lofty motive. 'If man is by nature peaceful and well-intentioned,' he declares, 'it is obvious that the tendency to engage in organized warfare is a quite abnormal manifestation, due to some arbitrary circumstances which it should not be beyond the wit of man to eliminate. . . . It is, therefore, not without importance to emphasize that human nature cannot possibly be made an excuse for the inevitability of war. Man is essentially a decent creature.' Now there is undoubtedly a great deal of cant talked about war's being inevitable 'so long as human nature is what it is.' Human nature is at once



## OUR ANCESTORS

peace-loving and pugnacious, competitive and co-operative, and the triumph of peace and co-operation is just as natural as the triumph of war and competition. The ordinary man has always preferred peace to war, except in the first flush of battle. The Greek soldiers at Troy longed for nothing more passionately than to get back to the black ships and embark for home. War, however, is unfortunately natural, too, when pressure of population urges a tribe in search of new territories, or a strange tribe threatens it, or there is a piratical desire for another people's wealth or lands, or when nation grows angry with nation till tempers are strained to the breaking-point.

'Man is essentially a decent creature', but he has not always behaved as such. The chief arguments against war, to my mind, must be drawn from the future, not from the disposition of our first ancestors in the past. It is pleasant to think of the Golden Age, but it is better to see it ahead than behind us. Still, it is better to see man as a decent creature at the beginning of things than nowhere. Let us not be pessimistic. After all, it is no small encouragement to be able to trace one's descent to a decent old savage who was ethical, exemplary, peaceful, honest, truthful, and well-disposed towards his fellow-men.



## XXVIII. The Magnetic Eye      ♪      ♪

AS we grow older, most of us look back a little sadly on a life of talents unused, of powers lost through neglect. Darwin confessed that the price he paid for his concentration on science was the atrophy of the poetical side of his nature. There have been poets, no doubt, who were equally wasteful of their scientific gifts. Some men again have sacrificed the body to the brain; some have allowed the brain to fall into disuse while developing the body. Few of us make full use of all our faculties.

How many men, for example, have made all the use that they might have made of their eyes? We are often told that observation is a gift that can be perfected through training, yet thousands of people can walk down a street or along a country lane and observe almost nothing. There are other faculties of the eye, however, besides observation, which very few of us even attempt to cultivate. The magnetism of the eye is an even more important aid to success than observation, yet I doubt whether one human being in a hundred gives it sufficient practice to preserve it from atrophy.

I have just been reading a little book, *The Human Wireless*, by Mr. H. P. Maskell, which contains a chapter entitled 'The Magnetic Eye and the Tentacles'; and it seems to me that with



## THE MAGNETIC EYE

this book in their hands the younger generation will have less excuse than my own for allowing the faculties of the eye to fail through lack of employment. 'Magnetic eyes,' as the author says, 'are an asset too valuable to be neglected', and he not only impresses upon us the value of the asset, but describes a number of exercises by which the magnetism of the eyes can be strengthened.

Here, for example, is an exercise that is as pleasant as it is profitable. 'Without blinking or moving the eyelids, open the eyes as widely as possible. Move the ball rapidly from left to right, and then up and down several times. Rest for a moment; then roll the eyes in a circular movement.' After a week's practice of this exercise any tolerable-looking young man should be able to get a job as a crooning tenor in a dance-band. Another exercise is: 'Stand in front of a looking-glass in a moderate light. Open the eyes as widely as possible, so that the whites of the eyes are visible above the ball. Keep them in this position for one minute.' Having seen yourself looking like this even for one minute, you will begin to wonder whether you were not born to be a dictator.

We need not confine our practice of ocular magnetism to the home, however. We can practise it on strangers in the street or in the restaurant—anywhere, indeed. All that we have to do is to stare fixedly at some one a few yards away—even at the back of his head—and will that he shall turn his head and look at



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

us. 'Try this in the train,' we are advised, 'with some one sitting at the opposite corner of the compartment. After a few seconds he or she will begin to fidget, and then will turn round with a look of inquiry or surprise. If you find him staring at you, look steadily, not directly into his eyes, but at the bridge of his nose. After a moment, he will relax his gaze, and turn away, more or less in confusion.' This trick looks promising on paper, but suppose the other man has also practised magnetism of the eyes and, instead of turning away in confusion, begins to look steadily at the bridge of your nose as you are looking at the bridge of his. What happens then? Do you count it a draw and shake hands? Or do you transfer your gaze from the bridge of his nose to his equally unprepossessing ears and smile meaningly? There is always the danger in these staring matches that the other man will think you are trying to insult him and will assault you in return, or, alternatively, that he will believe he has been shut up with a lunatic and will pull the communication cord and insist on your removal from the train.

My own advice would be, when among strangers, to keep the magnetic eye as far as possible for purposes of defence. Do not stare magnetically at the bridge of a man's nose if he is doing you no harm; but, if he menaces you in any way, then by all means let your magnetic rays begin to play upon his nose like a searchlight. We have the assurance of the author of *The Human Wireless* that 'the



## THE MAGNETIC EYE

penetrating glance mentioned above, when the gaze is fixed coolly and steadily, not directly into the eyes of an opponent, but in the middle of the bridge of his nose, is a very potent aid when resenting an insult or averting a threatened attack. 'To the offender,' we are told, 'the effect is as if you were piercing into his very soul, and he generally retires discomfited.' School-boys will now know how to behave when a master is about to cane them. They will only have to look fixedly at the middle of the bridge of his nose to see a miracle happening. The cane will fall from his palsied hand; he will blush a deep crimson; and, in less than a minute, he will be slinking out of the room like a dog that has lost its master's favour.

The ordinary magnetic eye, however, is only the A B C of the business. If you want to influence people really powerfully, you must acquire the 'tentacles'—'a much more subtle device for bringing others under the influence of thought vibrations'. In order to do this, you practise on some such object as a pepper-box at a distance of about ten feet. You imagine two lines advancing from your chest till they encircle the object and then bringing it 'nearer and nearer to you, so that it will be within your reach'. A second exercise is to send the imaginary lines direct towards the object, so as, apparently, to push it farther away. After you have mastered this art, 'you will discover that you have grown two supple limbs or claws of incredible length—invisible, it is true, but



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

none the less very effective indeed for certain purposes'.

You may inquire, 'What purposes?' The ordinary man, after all, can get the pepper more easily by asking for it or reaching for it than by imagining that he has seized it with tentacles issuing from his chest. The real object of the exercises, however, is to gain control over other human beings. You can use the tentacles, like the magnetic eye, for example, on people in restaurants. You see somebody sitting with his back to you a few yards away. 'Send out the tentacles to grip him by the neck, and bend them so as to draw him to you. When he turns his head, study your programme or evening paper, apparently oblivious to his existence, but keep up the tension.' He will not suspect what is happening, but he will gradually become interested in you and may even come over and ask whether he has not met you somewhere.' The author of *The Human Wireless* assures us that he has formed some valuable friendships which began in this manner. He warns us, however, that 'the experiment may end in a less satisfactory manner in the case of two individuals who are by nature repellent to each other'. He does not say exactly what happens when you find that the man whom you have gripped by the neck with your tentacles is a notorious blackmailer with an evil glint in his eye and the strongest pair of invisible tentacles in London.

It is true that we are told how to repel



## THE MAGNETIC EYE

undesirable people with our tentacles as well as how to attract likeable people. But can we be sure that the repellent people will not, instead of being repelled by our tentacles, grip us with theirs? You are sitting in a train, for instance, and see a loathsome-looking person near you. The author advises you, in such a situation, to send out the tentacles in a straight line. 'Visualize them,' he advises, 'as two sharp spears pricking him and pushing him from you. He will grow more and more fidgety and restless, till at last he will make some excuse to leave, and will edge away to the other side of the compartment.' But will he? I am a little alarmed at the prospect of a world in which restaurants and railway compartments will be crowded with people, some of them gripping you by the neck with their tentacles and others of them pushing and pricking you with theirs as with spears. Surely in such circumstances any man of spirit dining in a restaurant would rise up and begin to throw things about. He would not mind whether one of them hit a man who was gripping him by the neck or a man who was pricking him as with a spear. He would feel that a restaurant was no place for the practice of psychic tentacles and would march from table to table, looking fixedly at the bridge of the nose of everybody present till the last tentacle-owner lowered his eyes and slunk away in shame, leaving a hungry man to dine in peace.

It is only fair to say that the author does not believe in the existence of such dangers as I have



## BOTH SIDES OF THE ROAD

conjured up. He believes that in the matter of projecting tentacles good men will nearly always get the better of bad. The bad have not enough vital energy to grip you psychically by the neck in a restaurant. 'Vicious and ill-natured persons,' he declares, 'exhaust their vital energy in brooding and other enfeebling habits.' In case any evil-minded person should think of employing the tentacles, however, he issues a warning. 'Providence,' he says, 'has a strange way of intervening with startling results. Only with clear minds and pure hearts can we dare to face the regions of the unseen world.'

Well, here is a talent which, whether through wickedness or through idleness, I have never used. My telepathic tentacles, I am afraid, are by now as incapable of growth as my caudal appendix. If they were not, what a sensation I might be able to create at my hotel during the Easter holidays! I must leave it to younger and better men, however, to develop these latent capacities. But let them not practise on me. I am tentacle-proof when sitting before a dish of saddle of mutton in a restaurant.



METHUEN'S GENERAL LITERATURE



